RISK & DECISION-MAKING

COLONEL (RETIRED) BERND HORN, EDITOR

THE CANSOFCOM EDUCATION & RESEARCH CENTRE

MISSION

The mission of the Canadian Forces Special Operations Forces (CANSOFCOM) Education and Research Centre (ERC) is to support the professional development framework within the Command in order to continually develop and enhance the cognitive capacity of CANSOFCOM personnel.

VISION

The vision of the CANSOFCOM ERC is to be a key enabler to CANSOFCOM as an intellectual centre of excellence.

ROLES

The CANSOFCOM ERC is designed to:

1. Develop educational opportunities and SOF specific courses and material to enable CANSOFCOM professional development (PD);
2. Provide and / or assist in accessing academic advice on diverse subjects to support CANSOFCOM personnel undergoing professional military education (PME) and PD;
3. Conduct focused research and provide advice on seeking additional research capacity for CANSOFCOM best practices and force development;
4. Record CANSOFCOM's classified history;
5. Coordinate the publication of CANSOF educational material; and
6. Support CANSOFCOM's "up and out" Communication Strategy.

In brief, the ERC helps to make the cognitive warrior a reality. We prepare members to make good decisions in the midst of chaos and complexity. Essentially, we help to enable members to be their best under the worst of circumstances.

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Colonel (Retired) Bernd Horn, Editor

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FOREWORD

It is my pleasure to introduce the latest Canadian Special Operations Forces Command (CANSOFCOM) publication – *Risk & Decision-Making*. This volume represents the output from the 2018 international CANSOFCOM/Joint Special Operations University (JSOU)/Special Operations Command (North) (SOCNORTH)/Royal Military College of Canada (RMCC) Special Operations Forces (SOF) Symposium. Importantly, the 2018 SOF Symposium represents the eighth iteration of this international event. Significantly, the symposium participants included members from across the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF), as well as a number of our national security partners and members from our international SOF community. This expansive array of participants not only broadens and deepens our sharing of knowledge, but grows our relationships.

The theme for the symposium and resultant book, as stated in its title, is "Risk and Decision-Making." The topic is both timely and germane to our profession, specifically to special operations. The SOF community operates in a very complex and ambiguous security environment. We undertake operations and tasks, often with little support and sometimes, due to the unknowns, with the slimmest of guidance in very hazardous locations. In these circumstances, the assessment of risk, both physical and "political" becomes critical to mission success.

The assessment of risk, however, is difficult. It is very subjective and is based on individual and/or organizational circumstance and perspective. For some, the line between risk acceptance and recklessness can be quite slim. Yet, risk, defined as "a probability or threat of damage, injury, liability, loss, or any other negative occurrence that is caused by external or internal vulnerabilities, and that may be avoided through pre-emptive action," can be quite subjective. Significantly, the consequences and impact of poor risk assessment can be substantial. It is for that very reason that the symposium and its follow-on book are so important. To be operationally effective, it is paramount that we understand risk, its assessment and its impact on decision-making.

As such, I wish to thank all the contributors to this volume for taking the time to share their insight and experience. The international flavour of authors makes

this publication incredibly rich and I commend it to all members of the SOF and National Security communities. After all, the intent of the SOF Symposium and publication series is to share, learn, expand the network and professionally develop our SOF community so that individually, as well as collectively, we optimize our operational effectiveness.

Peter Dawe
Major-General
Commander CANSOFCOM

INTRODUCTION

Intuitively everyone understands the concept of risk. We all face various levels and degrees of risk every day. Simple decisions such as running an amber light, jaywalking on a busy street, making an extra stop before a meeting or event, participating in extreme sports, driving at speed, disagreeing with your boss, taking a short-cut through a darkened park or alley at night, are all simple examples of potential daily risks. Most people make these decisions involving risk assessment subconsciously without much thought or concern. Conversely, other decisions such as actions that may put your life, property or wealth at risk consume more thought and attention. Interestingly, the perception of risk varies from person to person. In short, risk assessment is very subjective.

In essence, risk is influenced by the perspectives of individuals, groups and / or institutions. Through these subjective filters, risk, as perceived by a specific entity, is the probability of positive or negative consequences stemming from a given action or decision as weighed against the perceived benefit. The consequences can be in the form of a reward (e.g. fame, fortune) or damage or injury (e.g. physical harm, financial loss, damage to reputation) to individuals, groups or institutions.

Notably, taking a risk is different than engaging in a gamble. Risk is the deliberate calculus of the likelihood of how certain actions/decisions will have positive or negative outcomes. This computation helps to determine whether an action or decision will be undertaken. Conversely, a gamble is taking a decision or action based on an uncertain outcome, a decision that relies at least partly on a degree of chance that the desired result will be realized.

For SOF, the concept of risk is an extremely important issue. SOF normally operate in small teams, often far from supporting agencies or organizations. They often work in chaotic, dangerous environments that are ambiguous and complex (i.e, constantly changing). As a result, risk is ever-present. As such, SOF leaders and operators must ensure that they fully understand risk and the factors that lead to risk adversity and risk acceptance. They are entrusted with sensitive tasks that can have strategic impact. Therefore, they must ensure that they fully embrace the requirement to take prudent, calculated risks that provide the best likelihood that

they achieve the desired results. Additionally, they must be able to differentiate prudent risk taking from reckless gambling. They simply cannot gamble on outcomes when so much is at stake. When deployed they represent the credentials of a nation. Therefore, their actions must be reasoned and reflect not only the commander's intent, but also their country's national interest. Their decisions and actions cannot be reckless, and instead must show determination to accomplish the mission despite the obstacles that will always be present.

This volume, which is derived from the 2018 SOF symposium on "Risk & Decision-Making" at the Royal Military College of Canada in Kingston, Ontario, is intended to assist SOF personnel, as well as other military and inter-agency individuals, glean a better understanding of risk. The contributors include experienced military commanders and civilian decision-makers, as well as distinguished scholars.

The book is both a theoretical, as well as a practical treatise of the concept of risk. In essence, a number of chapters explore risk as a theoretical concept, defining its character and the factors that lead to risk adversity and risk acceptance. Other chapters speak to risk as a leadership challenge, providing insight into how to identify, measure and explain risk to others. Lastly, the risk to SOF of not evolving and of spiralling to irrelevance is also explained.

In sum, *Risk & Decision-Making* is a window into the nebulous concept of risk. It illuminates this concept and provides insight into how individuals can better identify and mitigate risk in order to accomplish their missions.

CHAPTER 1

RISK: A NEBULOUS CONCEPT

Colonel (Retired) Bernd Horn

Risk – intuitively we all understand the concept. But, in essence, its meaning, impact and effect are variable and risk is seen differently by different people. For example, many people have an overwhelming fear of flying. To them the idea of flight is full of risk. Yet, those same people will not give getting in their car and driving someplace a second thought. Driving is seen as routine, an everyday event, and other than getting insurance, which is both a legislated requirement, as well as a "just in case" prudent decision, it is seen as being low risk. However, facts reveal a different story. Out of 30 million commercial flights in 2014, there were only 21 fatalities. Odds of dying on one of those flights was 0.000007. A very low risk of death. Traffic fatalities, however, numbered 1.34 million or 2.45 per cent of all deaths. Clearly, one is more likely to die on the highway.[1]

Another telling example of the impact of perspective of risk is terrorism. Many people believe the risk of falling victim to terrorism is very high. Travel and activities are restricted due to the perceived risk. In fact, since the terrorist attack on the Twin Towers in New York City on 11 September 2001 (9/11), despite the successful counter-terrorism actions worldwide, individuals feel less safe now than ever before. A 2014 NBC poll revealed, "nearly half of Americans now believe their country is less safe today than before the 9/11 attacks."[2] That number is almost double from a similar poll taken the previous year. Significantly, since then there have been a number of high-profile terrorist attacks in Europe and North America. Predictably in the wake of this terrorist onslaught countries across the globe are increasing their security forces, infrastructures, procedures, powers for law enforcement and security agencies, as well as legislation to deal with the perceived spike in terrorism. Billions of dollars are being sunk in the fight to combat terrorism. Yet, the risk of an actual terrorism event occurring has actually decreased. In fact, terrorist incidents

have actually declined. In 2014, there were 226 terrorist attacks (attempted/foiled/executed) and 774 terrorism arrests. In 2015, there were 193 and 1,077 respectively, and in 2016 the numbers dropped further to 142 and 1,002 respectively.[3] Terrorism, in 2016, accounted for 34,676 deaths or 0.06 per cent of all global deaths.[4] As one analyst noted:

> In 2016, Western Europeans were 85 times more likely to die of a heat wave than from terrorism, 50 times more likely to die in a biking or water-sports accident and 39 times more likely to be killed by consuming a toxic product. They were 433 times more likely to die of suicide and 32 times more likely to die by homicide.[5]

Notably, in 2018, there was another 33 per cent drop in global terror attacks and terrorism fatalities dropped to a ten-year low.[6]

A final example is risk ascribed to skydiving. To some, there could be nothing riskier or more dangerous than jumping out of a serviceable aircraft. Skydiving by these individuals is seen as a very risky endeavour. Yet, to trained and experienced jumpers, particularly those using state-of-the-art equipment, the risk is seen as negligible. For example, in 2013, there were only 24 deaths out of a total of 3.2 million jumps. That translates to likelihood of death eight times in a million jumps or 0.0075 deaths per 1,000 jumps.[7] In 2017, there were also only 24 fatalities and in 2018 only 16 deaths due to skydiving.[8]

RISK DEFINED

So, what exactly is risk? There are a number of definitions. The *Webster Dictionary* explains risk is the "possibility of loss or injury."[9] Another on-line dictionary describes risk as "Exposure to the chance of injury or loss; a hazard or dangerous chance"[10] and the *Business Dictionary* expounds risk as "a probability or threat of damage, injury, liability, loss, or any other negative occurrence that is caused by external or internal vulnerabilities, and that may be avoided through pre-emptive action."[11]

Experts, such as engineers, argue that "Risk equals probability times consequence."[12] As mentioned, the concept of risk is a very indefinable topic. In essence, it is shaped

by the perspectives of individuals, groups and/or institutions. Risk, as seen through subjective filters, can be defined as the probability of something possibly going wrong and the subsequent consequences of that outcome in the form of damage or injury (i.e. physical, reputational, financial or "political") to individuals, groups or institutions.

Definitions aside, once again, since risk is very subjective, it is very difficult to measure. It is for that reason that risk is often hard to convey to others since it is a rather nebulous concept.

TYPES OF RISK

Since the concept of risk is very subjective, it should not be surprising that perception of risk for certain events or actions is not viewed in the same manner. Research has revealed that "people overestimate their ability to influence events, which, in fact, are heavily determined by chance."[13] Quite simply, people tend to be overconfident about their ability to accurately forecast events. Moreover, they are also overconfident in their risk assessments and far too short-sighted in their assessments of the wide range of outcomes that may occur.[14] The fateful decision to advance towards the Yalu River in November 1950, which prompted the Chinese to enter and prolong the Korean War is such a case. As the American and United Nations (UN) forces began to push the North Koreans out of South Korea, President Harry Truman's policy "switch from 'containment' to 'rolling back' [North Korea] was made in the face of repeated threats of military intervention by the Communist Chinese government. Truman and his advisers decided to ignore the risks and took a huge gamble, without quite realizing how the stakes would be if they lost."[15] As a result of attempting to dismantle the North Korean regime, contrary to the dire warnings of the Chinese government, Truman expanded and extended the scope and cost of the war.

Furthermore, research has indicated that individuals, groups and institutions tend to "anchor their estimates" on current understanding of the environment, despite the realization that there is a real danger in trying to make future projections of a very dynamic, complex, rapidly evolving future security environment based on recent history. Groupthink and confirmation bias (i.e. the tendency to place more weight/favourable response on information that supports one's position and

suppresses information that contradicts one's position) simply exacerbates the issue.[16] Of great concern is the fact that researchers have found that "when events depart from our expectations, we tend to *escalate commitment,* irrationally directing even more resources to our failed course of action—throwing good money after bad."[17] This result was the case with the Truman Administration in the Korean War. Study of his Administration's decision-making process, particularly decisions regarding Chinese capability and intent to protect North Korean territory, highlighted "that the group of decision-makers did not correct each other's oversights but instead supported each other's beliefs in a manner that increased risk-taking."[18]

The subjective nature of risk, compounded by the impact of individual and organizational biases, make the concept of risk even more difficult with which to come to grips. Often times, individuals, groups and organizations misinterpret or simply choose to overlook ambiguous threats or events. In fact, experts explain that regularly rather than make a conscious effort to mitigate potential risk, individuals and organizations "actually incubate risk through the normalization of deviance." Simply stated, they tolerate minor failures and ignore early warning signals of problems or deviance as "one-offs" or aberrations rather than tripwires of imminent danger.[19]

The tendency to under-estimate possible risk is exacerbated by the fact that there are a number of types of risk. These are:

1. Preventable Risk;
2. Strategic Risk; and
3. External Risk.

Preventable Risk

Preventable Risk refers to risk that an individual or organization may incur due to the behaviours or actions of individuals that run counter to the organizational ethos and its regulations or policies. The risk assessment equation is simple. There is no gain or reward to be garnered by taking risk in this sphere. Instead, normally, clear codes of conduct, expectations, rules, regulations and policies are promulgated to guide behaviour and avoid any transgressions. The Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) and

his institution of Operation Honour provides an excellent example of preventable risk. The CDS direction and the implementation of strict rules and guidelines have been put in place to avoid the risk of behaviours/actions that may cause negative consequences for service men and women (e.g. sexual harassment, poor morale, disciplinary action, reputational effects for both institution and individuals).

Strategic Risk

Strategic Risk is risk that is undertaken voluntarily with the expectation of achieving a desired outcome, often with the desire for high reward. This approach can refer to either individuals or groups/organizations/governments. For instance, individuals may decide to risk money by investing in precarious capital ventures with the hopes of gaining great financial reward. Others may undertake daredevil stunts to glean notoriety or financial or reputational gain. At a higher level, Argentinian President (and military dictator) Leopoldo Galtieri's decision to invade the Falkland Islands (aka Malvinas) was a very risky venture that consequently resulted in the Falklands War with Britain. The risk was taken in hopes it could settle a long-standing dispute and restore the Falkland/Malvina Islands to Argentina (and quell rising domestic protests).

External Risk

The final type of risk is External Risk, which refers to risk that is beyond the control of individuals or organizations.[20] Contingency plans, mitigating strategies and insurance are all means of trying to deal with external risk, but in the end, these are risks of natural disasters, international political developments, market crashes, pandemics, etc. Although one can clearly assess the danger and consequence of risk of this nature, it is very difficult to accurately foresee or influence these events in any substantive way. As a result, when dealing with external risk it is a matter of early identification and rapid implementation of mitigation strategies. The Ebola Crisis in northwest Africa provides a contemporary example. Once the epidemic commenced and was identified it became a matter of travel restrictions, international medical support, segregation/isolation and careful management of travellers.

For individuals, external risk can also refer to political decisions that are made that have a direct and impactful effect on themselves and the organization. For instance,

in World War II when 22 Office of Strategic Services (OSS) agents were discovered in Spain, a neutral country teetering on support for the Nazis, nine were killed in a shoot-out and 13 captured. To avoid a diplomatic catastrophe, the US government disavowed the agents who were on an approved mission, stating they were a rogue element within the OSS that was no longer under governmental control. All 13 agents were subsequently executed by the Spanish government.[21]

RISK ASSESSMENT

There is no template or fixed rules on how a risk assessment should be conducted. However, there are recognized general principles that should be followed. For instance, there are five steps to risk assessment that will provide individuals with a reliable process. These are:

1. Identify the hazards – initially it is important to recognize the difference between a "hazard," namely, something with the potential to cause harm, and "risk," the potential of that harm to be realized;

2. Decide who might be harmed and how – having identified hazards, it then becomes possible to identify who is at risk;

3. Evaluate the risks and decide on control measures – having identified hazards and possible people affected by the hazards, it is now possible to put mitigation strategies in place (e.g. removal, barriers, policies, regulations, contingency plans, etc.;

4. Record your findings and implement them – these actions ensure that the risk is mitigated and that there is a record to ensure hazards, risk and mitigation strategies are not lost with time or turn-over; and

5. Review your assessment and update if necessary.[22]

RISK MANAGEMENT

Risk management focuses on identification, assessment, and prioritization of events that may represent potential risk for individuals or organizations. It is an important

concept that has become an important tool for mitigating risk. It is defined as, "the logical development and carrying out of a plan to deal with potential losses. The purpose of the risk management program is to manage an organization's exposure to loss and to protect its assets."[23] Interestingly, when it comes to risk management, psychologist Norman Dixon made a disturbing observation. He reported:

> Research has shown that people vary in the degree to which they adjust the riskiness of their decisions to the realities of the external situation. Individuals who become anxious under conditions of stress, or who are prone to be defensive or deny anything that threatens their self-esteem, tend to be bad at judging whether the risks they take, or the caution they display, are justified by the possible outcomes of their decisions… Less anxious individuals will act more rationally because they are able to devote greater attention to the realities with which they are confronted.[24]

The Crash of United Flight 173 is an interesting example. Part of the risk management plan for airlines was the creation of checklists to be used in aircraft to ensure proper procedures were undertaken to avoid risk of a catastrophic accident due to oversight or incorrect actions being undertaken in the event of a crisis. In the case of United Flight 173, its landing gear would not release. The pilot called an emergency and then diligently went through the checklist. He became so fixated on the checklist that he failed to pay attention to the flight engineer warning of fuel levels. His focus was on procedure not purpose. Not surprisingly, the aircraft ran out of fuel and crashed. The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) assessed the crash as totally preventable. They stressed the requirement to focus on "risk adaptation instead of mitigation, to accept the inevitability of unexpected mechanical failures, and build flexible systems to combat these unknowns." In essence, the FAA determined that "the risks of acting too slowly were higher than the risks of letting competent people make judgement calls."[25]

TYPES OF RISK RESPONSE

Risk response is the process of mitigating/controlling identified risks. It is part of the risk management process. In the simplest of terms, it is the planning and decision-making process used to determine how to deal with identified risk. The following are the basic types of risk response:[26]

- Avoid – change your strategy or plans to avoid the risk.
- Mitigate – take action to reduce the risk.
- Transfer – transfer the risk to a third party. For example, purchase insurance.
- Accept – decide to take the risk. In reality, most, if not all, actions/plans involve a degree of risk.
- Share – spread the risk across multiple teams/partners.
- Contingency – ensure plans have contingency elements for potential risk factors.
- Enhance – enhancement is a response for "positive risk." For example, if accelerating a plan/operation can free up resources/access additional resources, than the decision may be taken to speed up the process to take advantage of the opportunity costs.
- Exploit – another factor for positive risk. For instance, if an operation is completed early, or new information becomes available as a result of the operation, a follow-on mission may be taken because of the availability of resources or the presence of new information.

FACTORS AFFECTING THE PUBLIC PERCEPTION OF RISK

The issue of risk is one that is shared by everyone in every walk of life. Risk assessment and mitigation is done on a daily basis by people based on situation and circumstance. In fact, researchers have developed a number of factors that impact risk perception in the general public. They are:

1. Catastrophic Potential: if fatalities would occur in large numbers in a single event (e.g. aircraft crash);

2. Familiarity – unfamiliar or novel risks apparently worry people more;

3. Understanding – if people feel they do not understand how an activity or technology works their sense of risk increases;

4. Personal Control – if individuals feel the potential for harm is beyond their control – they worry more;

5. Voluntariness – if people do not choose to engage in an activity, the risk feels more threatening;

6. Children – the feeling of risk is much worse if children are involved;

7. Future generations – if the risk threatens future generations people tend to worry more;

8. Victim Identity – identifiable victims rather than statistical abstractions make the sense of risk rise;

9. Dread – if the effects generate fear the sense of risk increases;

10. Trust – if the institution(s) involved are not trusted risk rises;

11. Media Attention – more media means more worry;

12. Accident History – bad events in the past boost the sense of risk;

13. Equity – if the benefits go to some and the dangers to others, people feel the risk is increased;

14. Benefits – if the benefits of the activity or technology are not clear it is judged riskier;

15. Reversibility – if the effects of something going wrong cannot be reversed risk rises;

16. Personal Risk – if it endangers the individual, it is seen as riskier;

17. Origin – man-made risk is perceived as riskier than those of natural original; and

18. Timing – more immediate threats loom larger while those in the future tend to be discounted.[27]

RISK AND SOF

The issue of risk is one particularly close to SOF personnel at all levels. The old mantra of "be risk accepting, but only take prudent risks," is easy to say but not always so easy to translate in reality. As noted, risk is situational, relative and very ubiquitous. Considering the ambiguous, complex, chaotic and dangerous security environment that SOF operate in, the prevalence and level of risk is consistently elevated. It is for this reason one SOF general officer explained, "The Navy needs to know that operators can make the right call in dangerous, high-risk settings where plans are changing constantly. As a result, BUD/S [Basic Underwater Demolition/SEAL] invest deeply in ensuring that every SEAL is holistically aligned in purpose with the strategic function of his unit and with the objective of any given mission."[28]

Similarly, General Stanley McChrystal observed of SOF operations in Iraq, "Today's operation would be complex, and the more moving parts, the higher the risk."[29] He went on to explain:

> Team members tackling complex environments must all grasp the team's situation and overarching purpose. Only if each of them understands the goal of a mission and the strategic context in which it fits can the team members evaluate risks on the fly and know how to behave in relation to their teammates.[30]

What exacerbates the issue of risk and SOF is human nature and popular held perceptions of the ultimate warrior. Dr. Ben Shalit, a former Chief Psychologist of the Israeli Defence Force, observed, "The image of the good fighter seems to be the risk taker."[31] Former Commander-in-Chief President George W. Bush echoed that thought. In his address to the US Naval Academy in May 2001, he declared, "I am committed to fostering a military culture where intelligent risk-taking and forward-thinking are rewarded, not dreaded. And I'm committed to ensuring that visionary leaders who take risks are recognized and promoted."[32] Additionally, psychologist Norman Dixon asserted, "Other things being equal, a man who is prepared to take risks makes a more popular leader than one who is not so inclined."[33] Veteran Ernest Jünger reinforced that observation. He acknowledged, "Bravery, fearless risking of one's own life, is always inspiring."[34]

Add to these risk inducing factors the actuality, noted by Bob Work the father of the AI-driven Third Offset Strategy, that "SOF guys are less risk averse than

conventional ground forces, so they're more apt to push the limit."[35] This proclivity at risk acceptance in SOF is even more telling when one considers that "risk-taking is not a natural behavior and requires a leader to be bold and audacious."[36] As one Australian Special Air Service Regiment officer explained, "We wouldn't be able to do the things we do if a guy knew he was going to be faced with a degree of danger and didn't have the confidence to confront that and carry out the task regardless."[37]

The outcome of these observations is the potential for SOF to be overly risk accepting. This reality obviously has its benefits and detriments. The ambush in Niger on 4 October 2017, was an example of the latter. Major General Mark Hicks, Commander US Africa Command directed, "I expect you to modify your assumptions about the level of risk you can accept. I expect you to plan and conduct operations with an increased margin of safety.… Back away from the edge, this is not Afghanistan or Syria."[38]

His admonition appears sensible. However, as already mentioned, risk is very personal and situational. What does "back away from the edge" actually mean? Arguably, the "edge" is different for each individual. So, what is it that makes individuals more risk accepting or risk adverse?

FACTORS THAT AFFECT RISK ACCEPTANCE

A survey of historical SOF and other military operations has produced a number of factors that appear to affect risk acceptance and risk adversity. Their importance lies in the ability to take this information and apply as required to garrison, training and operational situations to assist with making risk assessments. The identified factors are:

- No "skin" in the game/No personal risk
- Feeling of control/Control own destiny
- Self-confidence/Group Confidence/Over-confidence
- Perception of need to get something done
- Peer pressure/Groupthink
- Contempt for ability of opposition
- National credibility at stake

- Huge reward possible
- Well-prepared
- Ability to achieve surprise
- Innovation
- Desperation
- Time Constraints
- Fatigue
- Opportunity
- Complacency

NO "SKIN" IN THE GAME/NO PERSONAL RISK

The first factor is not entirely surprising, particularly for anyone who has been sent on a mission planned and/or directed from a higher headquarters. Intuitively, the idea of accepting a higher level of risk is easier or more readily done if you personally do not have to face that demon. Operation Colossus, the first Allied airborne commando raid on 9/10 February 1940 to destroy the Tragino Aqueduct in south-eastern Italy, is a perfect example. Planners convinced decision-makers that the mission would meet the Prime Minister's demands for an ambitious raiding policy and it could possibly lead to Italy pulling out of two theatres of war (i.e. North Africa and Macedonia). The risk to the 38 commandos who would be stranded 50 kilometres from the coast without a realistic chance of escape or survival was downplayed as a minor risk. The mission was approved.[39]

Another example is Operation Mikado, the plan for Special Air Service (SAS) operators to destroy Argentinian Étendard strike fighters and their Exocet missiles on their mainland airbase at Rio Grande, Tierra del Fuego. The British Director Special Forces, General Sir Peter De La Billière was a staunch protagonist for the mission. He envisioned landing two British C-130 Hercules transport aircraft loaded with approximately 60 SAS operators and their vehicles directly onto the tarmac at Rio Grande airbase. The SAS would then disgorge from the aircraft, similar to the Israeli mission at Entebbe years earlier, and destroy the Étendard fighters, the remaining Exocet missiles, as well as the pilots in their quarters.

De La Billière's plan was not met with enthusiasm. One former SAS operator recalled, "the Director [De La Billière] wished us all good luck, said he would have our backs and that we would have his full support throughout the [Falklands] campaign. Unfortunately, at that time, little did we realize what he meant, but we were to learn later in the conflict that we were being signed on to execute 'mission impossible' tasks, without the benefit of discussion or first refusal."[40]

The candid assessment was not alone. "In my own mind I saw it as a one-way ticket," Tom Rounds, the navigator in one of the two Hercules aircraft designated for the mission, confided. He added, "You knew you weren't coming back because there was no tanker plan for the return leg." Rounds revealed, "The Mikado Raid? I thought it was bloody stupid, actually."[41]

So too did the Officer Commanding SAS "B" Squadron. He was not convinced of the plan's viability. While staging on Ascension Island he voiced his concern. Director Special Forces was not impressed. De La Billière lamented, "I was dismayed to find that the attitude of this unit [B Squadron] remained lukewarm. The trouble, I found, lay in the squadron commander, who himself did not believe in the proposed operation."[42]

The end result, the squadron commander, Major John Moss, was fired. "Moss articulated what a lot of his men felt, and took the flak," opined Rounds.[43] Moss himself later explained:

> Only four people knew what was happening, I was one them. One person, who has written a book, didn't actually know everything as he wasn't at the training… I put my point of view across at the time, which I felt was the right one. After leaving the Army I went down to Argentina to look at things in a bit more detail. I'm happy with the decision I made. It was the correct one.[44]

FEELING OF CONTROL/CONTROL YOUR DESTINY

Predictably, feeling in control, which is often derived from confidence borne from good training, good planning and detailed intelligence, as well as confidence in self and team-members breeds risk acceptance. The award-winning journalist,

Sebastian Junger, observed, "The primary factor determining break-down in combat does not appear to be the objective level of danger so much as the feeling – even – illusion – of control. Highly trained men in extraordinarily dangerous circumstances are less likely to break down than untrained men in little danger."[45]

The German raid on the vaunted impregnable Belgian fortress of Eben Emael provides an excellent example of risk accepted due to a feeling of control. The seizure of the fortress was key to accessing crossing points across the Albert Canal and Meuse River to allow German invasion forces to cut through Belgium and Holland in the early hours of 10 May 1940. The German commando assault force of 86 personnel was responsible for neutralizing the fortress that consisted of 17 major gun positions and 1,200 defenders. However, the element of surprise (first time gliders would be used for an assault), innovation (newly invented shaped charges), detailed planning and intelligence, tight security and realistic training, provided the assault force with complete confidence allowing the mere 54 assault airborne engineer commandos who actually landed on the objective to neutralize the fortress in approximately 30 minutes allowing for the invasion force to advance unimpeded.[46]

A similar example is Operation Thunderbolt, the Israeli raid on Entebbe, Uganda. When terrorists hijacked an Air France A300 with 248 passengers aboard and finally settled at the old airport terminal in Entebbe with 106 Jewish hostages, having allowed the others to go free, Israel was left with a huge problem. Exacerbating the issue was the fact that since the airliner was of French origin, France was lead in negotiating. In addition, the Israelis were unsure of the Ugandan complicity in the current situation. The risk of a hostage rescue four thousand kilometres away seemed enormous. However, confidence in their intelligence, planning and commando forces led them to conduct a stunning operation that rescued 102 of the 106 hostages with the loss of only one military personnel in a ninety-minute operation.[47]

SELF-CONFIDENCE/GROUP-CONFIDENCE/ OVER-CONFIDENCE

Related to the previous factor, confidence in self and/or team can lead to risk acceptance. If individuals/teams feel they have the skill-sets, support, resources to accomplish a mission, they are more likely to take on extra risk to achieve their

objective. Operation Dingo provides a simple example. Between 23 to 25 November 1977, a force of 96 Rhodesian SAS operators and 88 soldiers from the Rhodesian Light Infantry attacked Robert Mugabe's Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army (ZANLA) headquarters in Chimoio, Mozambique. The following morning they launched another attack against a ZANLA training base in nearby Tembue. The assault was incredibly risky as they were grossly outnumbered and they risked the ire of the international community. Lieutenant-General George Peter Walls conceded, "Dingo was very risky, but well worth doing."[48] Planners assessed that during Operation Dingo, the most favourable ratio the Rhodesians could expect "would be seven enemies to one Rhodesian, but that ratio could rise to 40:1. The odds seemed overwhelming." The risk was well rewarded. The Rhodesians killed an estimated 3,000 insurgents and wounded another 5,000 at the cost of two Rhodesians killed and six wounded.[49]

Operation Paraquet, the SAS raid to recapture South Georgia Island during the Falklands War in April 1982, provides another example of risk having been accepted because of over-confidence. Hoping to establish observation posts to gather a better picture of the Argentinian garrison in Grytviken, the SAS ignored warnings and insisted on being landed on the Fortuna glacier, where 70 knot winds howled and the temperature hovered at -20 degrees Celsius. Lieutenant-General Cedric Delves, recalled:

> [Major] Guy [Sheridan] a hugely experienced mountaineer, advised us to avoid glaciers like the plague. *[HMS] Endurance* expressed strong opposition, citing that the unpredictable weather loaded the dice against success. In the background and unknown to me, the British Antarctic Survey [BSA] also briefed against going up onto glaciers, pointing out that even their experts were subject to tight safety rules when venturing into South Georgia's mountains.[50]

Similarly, Alan Bell an SAS operator at the time, later revealed that the BSA personnel with loads of experience had cautioned against using the Fortuna glacier. Bell lamented:

> We didn't listen to them. Everything they said not to do – we did. It was Special Forces arrogance. What do scientists know about what we do? New day every day – new disaster every day.[51]

The over-riding confidence, if not arrogance, cost the SAS and the British expeditionary force two helicopters and almost an entire troop of SAS operators on that mission.

A final example of over-confidence leading to risk acceptance was Field Marshal Erwin Rommel in his counter-moves during the British Operation Crusader offensive in North Africa in November 1941. The British attacked on 18 November 1941 with the intent of relieving the Tobruk garrison and pushing the Germans from Cyrenaica. Initially, they achieved tactical surprise and their offensive seemed promising. Rommel finally blunted the British advance on 24 November. In his normally audacious manner, Rommel decided to exploit the momentary British confusion and disorganization by shifting to the offensive. He scraped together a weak holding force to maintain the siege of Tobruk and marshalled all of his mobile forces for the pursuit. It burst into the British rear and caused panic and confusion.

The British Theatre Commander, General Claude Auchinleck, also took a huge risk. He gambled that Rommel did not have the resources to sustain his attack. As such, he risked the survival of the Eighth Army and ordered it to continue the advance. Both commanders now seemingly risked everything based on their confidence of their abilities and those of their armies.

In the end, the British were able to infuse fresh troops into the fight. The Germans were not. As a result, Rommel had to withdraw, but the gamble cost him greatly in troops, resources and territory. The Germans now retreated. They pulled back from Tobruk and lost Cyrenaica.

PERCEPTION OF NEED TO GET SOMETHING DONE

Often, undue risk is accepted because of the perception, or desire, that something needs to get done. Frustration with inertia, or fear that failure to do something/ameliorate the situation will lead to a loss in reputation or credibility can act as a catalyst to accepting risk. In many ways, the perception is there is greater risk of negative consequences by doing nothing rather than the risk entailed in action.

The entire German mission-type tactics/command philosophy of *Auftragstaktik* that was instilled by the Prussians following their loss to Napoleon in 1806 speaks to this approach. This concept posits that it is better to risk taking action in the

face of opportunity than to do nothing. As a result, subordinates are given clearly defined objectives but are trusted, and given the freedom, to plan and execute their mission with minimal interference from higher authority. Furthermore, the concept entails a lack of censure or punishment for subordinates using initiative in the face of opportunity, or acting in the absence of orders, to achieve the tactical objective. Rather, the failure to do so is chastised.

The SAS's first mission, Operation Squatter, is a telling example of risk acceptance due to the pressure of getting something done. Captain David Stirling's pitch to the commander-in-chief Middle East Forces was to drop behind enemy lines and destroy five of the German advanced airfields in advance of Operation Crusader. However, on the night of 16 November 1941, a torrential rain storm with howling winds raged across the moonless pitch black desert. One account later described the conditions. "It was one of the most devilish nights North Africa has known. Rain was splashing down in icy sheets in total darkness. Even on the ground the wind was a thirty-mile gale, murderous to parachutists. It was the worst possible night."[52] Both the Air Force and the staff at General Headquarters (GHQ) counselled against considering a parachute insertion and recommended scrubbing the mission. However, they left the decision to Stirling.

Stirling gathered his officers together. "Personally," he began, "I would like to go ahead regardless of the risk. It would shake the men's confidence in the unit if we chucked in our hand at this late hour."[53] He was also concerned what the cancellation would do to the unit's chance of survival at headquarters. All agreed to continue the mission.

Predictably, the drop was a catastrophe. Stirling himself conceded, "the operation was a complete failure."[54] Only 22 of the 65 SAS troops who participated in the drop made it to the rendezvous points. No German airfields were attacked. Not surprisingly, the reputation of the SAS tanked at GHQ.

Similarly, by 1944, the SOE wanted to drop its agents into Hungary. The choice of Pécs was controversial. The area had a considerable population of German origin. However, it was also the only district in which SOE had a contact and, therefore, planners felt "we are justified in taking the risk."[55] After all, pressure was mounting to move forward on advancing SOE operations in Hungary. The entire SOE team was captured.

PEER PRESSURE/GROUPTHINK

Within the SOF community peer pressure, direct or indirect, as well as group think are serious factors when considering risk accepting behaviour. Individuals who have self-selected to volunteer to join a particular organization; have passed through the same rigorous tests of selection and training; have shared hardship and experience; and have developed tights bonds of cohesiveness, as well as the fact they share the same strong organizational culture; often see the world and solution sets to given problems in a similar way. Moreover, camaraderie and the desire to be seen to be "on-board" and supportive often kills objective dissent or alternate views. As such, the group can easily suffer from collegiality and a lack of critical thinking with the result being a poorly thought out plan or decision. Professor Wilfred Trotter observed, "He [Mankind] is more sensitive to the voice of the herd than to any other influence."[56] Similarly, Professor Janis concluded, "a high degree of group cohesiveness is conducive to a high frequency of symptoms of groupthink, which, in turn, are conducive to a high frequency of defects in decision-making."[57] In essence, this can lead to more risk than is prudent being accepted so as not to "rock the boat."

The attempted invasion of the Bay of Pigs, an inlet of the Gulf of Cazones on the southern coast of Cuba, by a Central Intelligence Agency (CIA)-sponsored Cuban exile rebel group called Brigade 2506 on 17 April 1961, is a perfect example. In an effort to overthrow Fidel Castro whose Cuban Revolution ousted the Dictator General Fulgencio Batista, the CIA proposed an ambitious plan to President John F. Kennedy and his Cabinet. However, the strong views of Kennedy and his brother Robert, who was the Attorney General, carried the chamber and muted potentially dissenting views.[58] The end result was a complete disaster. The invasion was squashed within days and the failure greatly embarrassed the Kennedy Administration. Arguably, it also led to the Cuban Missile Crisis the following year.[59]

Another example is Operation Redwing in Afghanistan. In June 2005, a four-man Navy SEAL team established an observation post (OP) in the mountains overlooking a village housing a dangerous al Qaeda leader. During the mission three shepherds stumbled across the OP. The team now faced the decision of what to do with the Afghans. Fearing the reactions back home if they were to kill them, they decided to allow the shepherds to leave. The team leader revealed, "Was I afraid

of the liberal media back in the USA? Yes. And I suddenly flashed on the prospect of many, many years in a US civilian jail alongside murderers and rapists."[60] The entire team quickly agreed to his perspective. Not surprisingly, in no time, approximately 100 Taliban fighters began to hunt down the team. Only the team leader survived.

Contempt for Ability of Opposition

Perceptions of the ability and effectiveness of the opposition can also effect the level of risk acceptance. If the opposition is seen as weak, ineffective or vacillating, intuitively, planners, commanders and operators will accept a higher level of risk. The aforementioned Operation Dingo is a perfect example. So too is Russian President Vladimir Putin's strategic moves in the Ukraine and Syria. Realizing that NATO was unwilling to challenge Russia militarily unless there was a clear military provocation, he was able to orchestrate a complex assault utilizing hybrid warfare methodology (i.e. the employment of a wide range of overt and covert military, para-military and civilian measures in a synchronized manner) that achieved his aims in annexing the Crimea and establishing a break-away republic in the Donbass region in the Ukraine, without any NATO interference.

General Robert E. Lee's victory at Chancellorsville on 1 May 1863, provides another graphic example. Facing a Union army three times the size of his Confederate forces, Lee gambled, or risked complete destruction by dividing his force into three components – one to hold Union forces at Fredericksburg, one to meet a Union advance and a third to conduct a surprise thrust into the Union's undefended right flank. Lee accepted this risk because he realized the Union command was unimaginative, plodding and timid in their decision-making. He parlayed his risk into a rout of the Union forces.[61]

A final example occurred on 3 October 1993, when Task Force Ranger met a cataclysmic failure. Arguably, their contempt for the opposition, Somali militiamen, led to a risk acceptance that was greatly miscalculated. This was the seventh raid in Operation Gothic Serpent. The assault force consisted of 19 aircraft, 12 vehicles and 160 personnel. The mission was to capture two "top lieutenants" of the fugitive self-proclaimed president Mohamed Farrah Aidid in Mogadishu. The assault force followed exactly the same tactics, techniques and procedures (TTPs) it had for the previous raids. Moreover, the helicopters flew in circles above the ground force

at approximately 500 feet. Quite simply, the entire task force underestimated the ability of the Somalis to react quickly or effectively to the intrusion. In essence, the risk they accepted by not changing their TTPs but relying on past practice had an extremely high cost. The operation failed. The one-hour planned mission became a prolonged affair that dragged through the night into the following day. It was engulfed in a running firefight that resulted in 18 dead, 73 wounded, one helicopter pilot captured and the eventual withdrawal of the United States from Somalia months later in March 1994.[62]

National Credibility at Stake

A higher level of risk by decision-makers is also evident when organizational/institutional, or particularly national, credibility is at risk. President Jimmy Carter's decision to authorize a high-risk rescue operation, Operation Eagle Claw to release 52 American embassy staff members taken hostage and held for 444 days after three thousand Iranian students/protesters stormed the US embassy in Tehran was a direct result of the international and domestic perceptions of his administration's impotence to act. The mission's failure did little to alleviate the international loss of respect and credibility for the US.

The Falklands War provides another example, in fact, Operation Paraquet, once again. Although Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher's decision to go to war was initially enthusiastically embraced by Britons to correct the egregious insult of the loss of the Falkland Islands, very quickly the loss of ships and personnel brought about a sombre realignment of the cost of war. Domestic support plummeted. Thatcher required a quick win to bring support back on line. It was important to get a national win to restore credibility and morale. The Government decided the recapture of South Georgia Island would allow for a low risk endeavour to restore national stature.

Not everyone agreed. Lieutenant-General Sir Cedric Delves revealed:

> There were growing military reservations. Concern over South Georgia would mount over the coming days; at one stage Mike Rose [CO 22 SAS] remarking that Op Paraquet (all too easily corrupted to paraquat, a notably toxic herbicide) need to be killed off before it killed us off – by which he meant scupper the entire Falklands effort, Op Corporate itself.

> Strategically, the operation had probably been mounted because it could be involving a relatively small number of warships and few troops. It held the prospect of an early win this serving to strengthen the country's diplomacy.
>
> On the other hand, it could be viewed as a distraction from the Main Effort, the Falklands and its population, diverting resources, presenting a range of unwanted and unnecessary risks. Setback stood to damage our morale, correspondingly raise that of our enemy. And the risks were severe. At times the difference between success and catastrophe hung upon the thinnest of margins.[63]

However, while the risk calculation was correct, the military hierarchy failed to understand the strategic intent and requirement. After the retaking of South Georgia Island, Prime Minister Thatcher appeared on the steps of Downing Street and urged the nation to "Rejoice, rejoice."[64] Captain Chris Nunn, the officer commanding the Royal Marine contingent (M Company) sent to recapture South Georgia Island later acknowledged that the troops were "largely oblivious to the effect the retaking of South Georgia had in Britain."[65] It had the necessary morale boosting effect.

Huge Reward Possible

A common, and obvious, factor for risk acceptance is the "promise" or likelihood of a huge reward. If the payout is seen as out of proportion to the perceived chance of negative consequences, a higher level of risk will be accepted. An example of the acceptance of risk as a result of the expectation of a huge reward is Operation Market Garden, the airborne invasion of Holland intended to provide the Allies with a quick route into Germany in World War II. In his seminal work, The *Psychology of Military Incompetence*, Norman Dixon assessed:

> In its conception the plan [Market Garden] was a high-risk venture which, if it had paid off, might have shortened the war by several months. A secondary feature of the plan was that it promised to gratify [Field Marshal Bernard] Montgomery's wish that his armies would win the race to Berlin. In the event this incentive took precedence over the first, with calamitous results.[66]

The issue of risk was exacerbated when the Dutch underground reported the appearance of two SS armour divisions near the intended drop zones, and aerial reconnaissance captured the presence of German armour in the Arnhem area. Despite the warning, Montgomery and his senior commanders ignored the information because their plan fed their desire for a huge reward – a speedy route to Berlin. As Dixon explained, "But since these ugly facts did not accord with what had been planned they fell upon deaf ears." Montgomery dismissed the Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force (SHAEF) headquarters report as ridiculous. Lieutenant-General F.A.M. Browning, Commander of the 1st British Airborne Division, went so far as to reject the information quipping the tanks were "not serviceable at any rate." Amazingly, the intelligence officer who diligently tried to warn his superiors of the high-risk operation being planned, was counselled by the Corps Medical Officer to take some time off since he was clearly exhausted.[67] The end result was a calamitous Allied failure.[68]

Another example is Operation Oak, Captain Otto Skorzeny's rescue of Mussolini at Gran Sasso, Italy on 12 September 1943. Having executed a daring mission and rescued the Italian dictator from the mountain top plateau from the Hotel Campo Imperatore, Skorzeny was not to be cheated of his reward, namely, presenting the *Duce* to the Führer himself in Berlin. As a result, he risked the lives of Mussolini, himself and the pilot of a Fieseler Storch aircraft by insisting he accompany the dictator in the small, light, overweight aircraft. "Then the left landing-wheel hit the ground again," Skorzeny recounted, "the machine tipped downwards and we made straight for the gully. Veering left, we shot over the edge. I closed my eyes, held my breath and again awaited the inevitable end."[69] The aircraft dropped out of sight, but then slowly rose into the air as it gained power. Skorzeny delivered Mussolini to Hitler and reaped his reward: an immediate promotion to the rank of major, the award of the Knights Cross of the Iron Cross and leave to see his wife.

The suicide bombing in December 2009, at the CIA Forward Operating Base Chapman in Khost, Afghanistan, is another stark reminder of how heightened risk is accepted in the hopes of a huge reward. When Jordanian Khalil al-Balawi, who had infiltrated the senior ranks of al Qaeda, offered to turn himself in and assist with the hunt for Osama Bin Laden, the CIA readily agreed to terms that violated their standard operating procedures. Despite protests and warnings from the security staff, the up-and-coming CIA star and head of the remote station waved rudimentary security precautions such as a personal search of the apparent informant. She did

not want anything to discourage the prospect of a huge reward – the location of Bin Laden (as well as her role in locating him). Once inside the compound and face-to-face with the group of high-level CIA terrorist hunters he detonated a 66-kilogram explosive device instantly killing seven CIA operatives. This represented the CIA's worst loss of life in decades.[70]

Relatedly, the hunt for Bin Laden is a final example of risk acceptance in the hope of a huge reward. By mid-April 2011, the CIA believed they had located Bin Laden. "It was far from certain," President Barack Obama revealed, "and it took many months to run this thread to the ground."[71] Despite the enormous risks (e.g. violating Pakistani sovereignty, stigma of a failed attempt) and the objections of his vice president and secretary of defense, Obama sanctioned the mission hoping for a massive political reward. On 2 May 2011, the al Qaeda head was killed during a daring raid in Abbottabad, Pakistan. Obama's risk had paid off.

Well-Prepared

Not surprisingly, when individuals or organizations feel well prepared they are more willing to accept risk. This also correlates with high levels of confidence and control. The First Special Service Force (FSSF) seizure of Mount La Difensa on 3 December 1943 is one such example, as is the capture of the German positions on Pointe du Hoc on 6 June 1944 (D-Day) by the US Rangers. In both cases, the SOF organizations had well-trained troops, specialists/mountaineers who prepared the routes up the cliffs and supporting fires. In each case, the hazardous, risky approaches paid dividends as the positions were wrested away from the German defenders.

The So'n Tây Raid is another instance of preparation allowing for greater risk acceptance. Hoping to rescue a number of American prisoners of war (PoWs) from a suspected prison camp at So'n Tây, approximately 37 kilometres from Hanoi, a task force of 56 Special Forces soldiers, flying in six helicopters, penetrated the world's densest air defence system. Based on careful intelligence analysis of the air defence system and weather, the coordinated employment of 116 aircraft, and 170 rehearsals, the task force landed and killed approximately 100-200 enemy with no casualties of their own. Unfortunately, the prisoners had been moved to another camp.[72]

Ability to Achieve Surprise

The ability to achieve surprise is also a key factor in risk acceptance. The ability to catch an opponent unaware and unprepared provides great advantage that allows for the margin of risk to be raised. The German s*chwerpunkt,* or main effort in the Ardennes forest was a gamble much of the German high command did not support. Their view of the difficult terrain was shared by the Allies. The only terrain left unfortified between the French and Belgian defensive belt was the Ardennes forest, an obstacle the Allies believed would be impenetrable by German forces. In fact, the Allies were so adamant that the Ardennes represented no threat to a German incursion that the Belgians did little to supplement natural obstacles and many of their road blocks were left unmanned. The French were even more negligent. The French High Command "declined to block the forest roads by felling thousands of trees on the grounds that this would impede the advance of the cavalry."[73] In fact, Field Marshal Henri Pétain scoffed, "The Ardennes are impenetrable…this sector is not dangerous."[74]

Necessity, forced on the Germans when their original war plans fell into Allied hands, led to a change in design. Gambling that the Allies would be drawn by the feint through Holland, Belgium and northern France, the Germans pushed seven of their ten armoured divisions through the Ardennes, breaking out at Sedan and launching themselves into the rear of the Allied main positions forcing the epic Allied withdrawal at Dunkirk. The campaign lasted six weeks but was decided in only ten days.

The Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor is yet another example of risk acceptance based on the element of surprise. Hoping to catch the American Pacific Fleet at its home station in Pearl Harbor, Honolulu, Hawaii, the Japanese launched an audacious attack on the morning of 7 December 1941. They had hoped to cripple US sea power so that the Americans would be unable to interfere with Japanese expansionist plans in the Pacific Ocean, which had become a necessary because of crippling Western economic sanctions. The attack achieved total surprise. The first wave consisted of 183 aircraft, followed by a second wave of 168 attacking aircraft. They inflicted massive damage. They killed 2,403 Americans and wounded another 1,178. They sank or damaged 18 ships (including the sinking of six battleships) and destroyed and damaged 164 and 128 respectively. They achieved this success at the cost of only 29 aircraft and six submarines (five of which were midget submarines).

However, believing he had lost the element of surprise, the Japanese naval commander refused to dispatch a third wave of aircraft to destroy the base's fuel installations or repair facilities.[75] This failure, as well as the fact that all of the American aircraft carriers were at sea, allowed the US to quickly recover. In the end, the risk acceptance was misplaced. The attack failed to cripple US sea power, but it pushed the Americans into the war.

Innovation

Much like surprise, innovation also spurs risk acceptance. The use of gliders and shaped charges gave the Germans a decisive advantage on 10 May 1940, allowing 56 airborne engineers to neutralize a fortress that was categorized as impregnable prior to the assault. Similarly, the Italian invention of the manned torpedo, as well as rubber dry suits, underwater breathing apparatuses and specialty mines, allowed for high risk attacks on shipping in well-defended harbours. On 19 December 1941, the Italians infiltrated Alexandria Harbour and destroyed two British battleships the *Valiant* and *Queen Elizabeth*. The sudden loss temporarily changed the balance of power in the Mediterranean Sea.

Operation Badr, the Egyptian crossing of the Suez Canal on 6 October 1973, during the Yom Kippur War is another example of risk acceptance due to innovation. Egyptian engineers used war cannons to quickly cut passageways into the sand wall on the east bank of the canal. They then hastily laid bridges and ran ferries across the canal to allow five Egyptian infantry divisions to seize the Israeli Bar-Lev defensive line by the following day. Eventual Israeli counter-attacks were repulsed with the effective deployment of anti-tank weapons. By 8 October 1973, the Egyptians had penetrated along the entire east bank of the Suez Canal to approximately fifteen kilometres. However, the Israelis would eventually encircle the Egyptian army and occupy Egyptian territory. The war ended on 25 October 1973.

Desperation

Much like the feeling/need to accomplish something, desperation creates the urge to take greater risk to create momentum or achieve the mission. The 2nd Parachute Battalion attack on Darwin and Goose Green in the Falklands on 28-29 May 1982, provides an example. The Battalion made good progress during its night advance

and combat, but as daylight seeped over the sodden gorse-filled terrain the advance ground to a halt due to heavy Argentinian fire. The Battalion now fell behind in its schedule. With his lead company pinned down, the Commanding Officer, Lieutenant-Colonel H. Jones, virtually on his own, moved forward to attempt to get a better idea of the obstructing Argentinian positions. When he advanced to clear a problematic trench he was gunned down by another enemy position that he had failed to see. The extreme risk he took due to a sense of desperation to revitalize the stalled offensive was fatal. Apparently, however, his act was the catalyst for another push that won the day, earning him a Victoria Cross.[76]

Time Constraints

Time, always a short commodity, also drives risk acceptance. Backed up against a constantly closing window decision-makers are often left with the option of putting off a decision or event or taking higher risk. They often decide on accepting the higher risk. For instance, during Operation Colossus, aircraft issues, specifically problems with the paratrooper containers carrying weapons and equipment prior to take-off, which prompted an Air Force officer to strongly recommend the mission be delayed, was categorically refused. The mission commander decided to take the risk of malfunction rather than postpone the mission, which meant a delay of approximately one month until the next moon period (and the requirement to stall Churchill's raiding policy). Although five of the six aircraft dropped their paratroopers on target most of the containers did not release. As a result, only half of the explosives, one of twelve ladders and only a small portion of their weapons landed near the objective. This shortage of equipment had an adverse effect on the mission.[77]

In the same vein, during Operation Oak, Skorzeny realized that his rescue of Mussolini was time constrained, which drove his level of risk. He assessed that he had to drop quickly onto the objective and access the dictator within three minutes or his Italian guards would kill him. This drove Skorzeny to decide on using the DFS-230 glider for the dangerous assault onto the small mountain plateau. As one of Skorzeny's subordinates assessed, "May I suggest, sir, that we forget all about figures and trying to compute our chances; we both know that they are very small, but we also know that, however small, we shall stake our lives on success!"[78] Skorzeny also decided to have an Italian general accompany him to create confusion and delay with regard to the Italian guards. "Why not take with us an Italian officer,

someone who must be reasonably well known to the Carabinieri up there," Skorzeny explained, "His very presence will bluff the guards for a short time and restrain them from immediately reacting to our arrival by violence against the *Duce*."[79]

Finally, time was an essential factor in the Allied decision to launch Operation Overlord, the invasion of Occupied Europe. General Dwight D. Eisenhower was up against the wall. He had already delayed Operation Overlord for a month to give the Allies additional time to build up their strength. He then set 5 June 1944 as D-Day. However, cloudy skies, heavy rain and turbulent seas forced him to delay for 24 hours to see if the weather improved. The forecast dictated that there would be a brief window in the storm starting on the afternoon of 5 June extending into 6 June. Any further delay would mean a pause of two weeks until the tides were once again favourable. This extension could have compromised the Allied landing location. As a result, Eisenhower took the risk and made the call to invade.

Fatigue

Fatigue is often underestimated for its impact on decision-making and risk. It can actually increase risk acceptance due to the fact that thinking is impaired and/or a feeling of inevitability or lack of concern takes centre stage. When exhausted, normal precautions and best practices are forgotten. During the cataclysmic 34-day campaign in the Ia Drang Valley of the Central Highlands in South Vietnam in November 1965, fatigue played a critical element in risk acceptance. Following the savage three-day break-in battle at Landing Zone (LZ) X-Ray, which began on 14 November 1965, the 2nd Battalion, 5th Cavalry, which had come to reinforce LZ X-Ray was ordered to move to LZ Albany for extraction. Heavy rucksacks, difficult terrain, strained nerves, and extremely hot, humid weather conditions took their toll. The Battalion column was stretched out. During a long halt, fatigue got the better of leaders and no effort was made to ensure an adequate security posture was taken. Unknowingly due to fatigue, an unacceptable level of risk was assumed. As a result, when the North Vietnamese soldiers attacked they were able to shred the unsuspecting battalion piece-meal. The cost, 155 American soldiers dead and another 124 wounded.[80]

Opportunity

Additional risk is also often embraced when fleeting opportunity presents itself. In the spirit of German *Auftragstaktik*, the opportunity to take initiative and capitalize on a situation usually creates risk acceptance due to the perceived favourable position that presents itself. For example, during Operation Paraquet, in the aftermath of the successful helicopter strike on the Argentinian submarine *Santa Fe*, as well as the perceived effect of naval gunfire on the Argentinian positions, the British command team decided to use the surprise and confusion of the Argentinian force to their advantage and mount an immediate assault on the town, even though they had not planned for such a sudden deployment. Lieutenant-General Delves, then a squadron commander with the SAS recalled:

> We had ditched tactical surprise in near myopic favour of operational shock. Tactical surprise was lost, but we should cash in on the moral sway the Navy had just attained over the enemy. The Argentine garrison must be teetering upon psychological collapse, their hopes shattered, their defensive strategy in tatters. We needed to finish them off. They had just witnessed the loss of their forward and principal line of defence to a swarm of helicopters. Lord knows what they must think lay behind. We should feed their fears, get in before they could regain composure, threaten them with everything we could lay our hands on. Go, go, go, go, go![81]

The risk they accepted paid off as the Argentinians quickly surrendered.

Complacency

Complacency, the state of feeling satisfied with actions or decisions, although that feeling or belief is cloaked in an unawareness of actual dangers or deficiencies that the behaviour is actually opening one to, is the bane of professional soldiering. Complacency, also dangerously, creates an atmosphere of unintended risk acceptance.

The renowned American military historian S.L.A. Marshall described one graphic example of how complacency led to risk acceptance that had serious consequences during the Vietnam War in May 1966. A platoon left to guard LZ Hereford assumed

they were in a safe location and would soon be picked up by helicopters. Although the platoon commander realized their posture was ill-suited to an all-around defence and that a visiting journalist was walking from position to position, thus, giving away the location of his personnel, he did nothing to improve the situation. Neither did any of the troops scout the vicinity of their location or take up a security posture. The over-riding belief was "nothing will happen here." The platoon was suddenly attacked and virtually wiped out by a North Vietnamese attack.[82]

The earlier example of Operation Gothic Serpent is also relevant as a case of complacency and the acceptance of a higher level of risk based on the disregard for changing standing TTPs because of an underestimating of the ability of the opposition to react/adapt to your methodologies. Another graphic example is the 1 March 2019 Taliban attack on Camp Bastion (renamed Camp Shorab), which housed the Afghan Army's 215th Corps, in Helmand Province, Afghanistan. The camp, taken over from the Americans, lapsed into complacency and failed to ensure the proper security. Taliban fighters who hid inside a sewage tanker truck (realizing the stink would inhibit guards from actually checking its interior), as well as others who scaled a wire fence (entirely missed by sleepy guards in watch towers) were able to kill 23 Afghan soldiers and wound many more. The estimated 20-30 Taliban fighters were only neutralized after 20 hours of fighting and American airstrikes.[83]

FACTORS THAT AFFECT RISK ADVERSITY

In the same manner that some factors influence risk acceptance in individuals, others act to inhibit behaviour or decisions that may seem precarious in nature. These factors cause individuals to be more risk averse. These factors include:

- The presence of personal risk
- Lack of Knowledge/Situational awareness
- Lack of Control/Not in control
- Lack of Confidence
- Poor/Lack of Communications
- Fear
- Fatigue

Presence of Personal Risk

Not surprisingly, when personal safety is at play, risk acceptance often plummets. Most individuals do not have a desire to be hurt, maimed or killed. As such, actions are prudently considered with a meticulous cost/benefit analysis. One veteran stated, "A comrade on whom I could count, who took no unnecessary risks and knew what he was doing, was worth his weight in gold, in my eyes."[84]

Another example risk aversion with regards to personal safety by those in the field was provided by a commando veteran from WWII. Speaking to the practice of binding prisoners who were captured during raids for security and safety reasons, despite the fact that the procedure was outlawed by international convention, he stated, "Those orders we received from our superiors were always in accordance with the internationally accepted laws of warfare, but we violate them because our lives were at stake. While we were breaking them, those who framed them were probably fast asleep in their beds."[85]

Similarly, for the airborne commandos who assaulted the Tragino Aqueduct on 10 February 1941, and found themselves surrounded in southwestern Italy, the calculus became clear, even though they were surrounded by villagers and local police. Lieutenant Anthony Deane-Drummond later explained, "Women, children and unarmed peasants were everywhere and we would not be able to avoid casualties amongst them." He reasoned, "All we could achieve were a few extra hours of freedom at the price of a particularly odious and inglorious action."[86] Of the four groups that attempted to break out to the coast for submarine extraction, all but one surrendered without a fight. The one group that resisted capitulated rather quickly as their ammunition ran out, but not before killing two civilians. That group was stood up against a wall by a civilian mob to be gunned down. Only the intervention of an Italian military officer saved their lives.

Lack of Knowledge/Situational Awareness

A lack of detailed knowledge or situational awareness from which to assess a course of action is another source of risk aversion. The German confusion with regard to the massive D-Day airborne landings in Normandy on the night of 5/6 June 1944 provides a perfect example. Although the drops were widely scattered, which created serious issues of assembling the required combat power for the Allied

paratroopers, the wide dispersion made it difficult for German commanders to understand what the actual target was. Due to this lack of knowledge they hesitated releasing reserve forces, thus, allowing the Allies time to consolidate and execute their missions. A committee of German generals later noted:

> It is a unique characteristic of airborne operations that the moments of greatest weakness of the attacker and of the defender occur simultaneously. The issue is therefore decided by three factors: who has the better nerves; who takes the initiative first; and who acts with greater determination. In this connection, the attacker always has the advantage of being free to choose the time and place of attack, and he therefore knows in advance when the moment of weakness will occur, whereas the defender must wait to find out where and when the attack will take place. The attacker will always endeavor to aggravate the defender's disadvantages by deception and try to force him to split up his countermeasures.[87]

Another example of risk aversion based on a lack of knowledge/situational awareness is NATO's inaction to the Russian Hybrid attack on Ukraine. Unsure, or unwilling to acknowledge, Russia's expert application of a hybrid methodology to the conflict in the Ukraine, NATO stood by as Putin dismantled the Ukrainian state. US Army College Professor Antulio J. Echevarria II opined, "Gray Zone [hybrid warfare] war sits below threshold and level of violence to prompt United Nations (UN) security council resolutions or NATO Article 5 response yet [its] not peace." He explains that countries such as Russia and China "exploit this zone of ambiguity to accomplish 'wartime-like' objectives outside the normal scope of what military strategists and campaign planners are legally authorized or professionally trained to address"[88] This uncertainty creates risk aversion. As one Estonian official noted, "in the hands of Russia hybrid warfare could cripple a state before that state even realizes the conflict had begun, and yet it manages to slip under NATO's threshold of perception and reaction."[89]

Not in Control

Although initiative is always stressed as a core competency for all levels of soldiers and leaders, the reality is when one is not in control it is not always easy to be risk accepting. The personality of a superior often drives risk avoidance. If the superior is one who accepts mistakes, empowers subordinates to use their initiative, exudes

trust, is comfortable with dictating commander's intent but allowing subordinates to plan and execute within those parameters, then risk acceptance is normally high. However, those are rare individuals. More often than not, careerism, a zero tolerance for mistakes, the difficulty of not micro-managing subordinates are all factors that tend to be difficult for many superiors to overcome. As a result, those not in command, or in control, tend to be risk averse.

Lack of Confidence

When decision-makers lack confidence in the plan, situation or others, risk aversion spikes. The example of the SEAL Team during Operation Red Wing provides a clear example. Having no confidence in the ability of a liberal press back home to give them an objective, impartial judgement, the four-man team fatefully decided to allow the Afghan shepherds to go free, believing the risk of releasing them had fewer consequences than killing them. The risk aversion caused by the lack of confidence in the press and their domestic audience led to the death of three of the four team members.

Operation Colossus provides yet another example. Following the attack on the Tragino Aqueduct an allied reconnaissance flight took pictures, which based on the angle, appeared to show no damage to the bridge. With a failed mission, an aircraft that ditched in the sea because of engine failure (in the same vicinity as the commando extraction rendezvous point with a submarine), the Admiralty, having lost confidence in the mission and the commandos, called off the submarine extraction, leaving the 38 individuals stranded. Although all four teams were captured prior to the set extraction date, the Admiralty was not aware of that fact when they cancelled the submarine. The rationale was that they would not risk a submarine on top of all the "failures" the mission had accumulated to date.[90]

Poor/Lack of Communications

Clarity and knowledge create confidence and spur action. The lack, thereof, has the opposite effect. Poor communications, poorly articulated intent, willful ignorance, limited cognitive abilities, fatigue, noise and stress can all lead to misunderstanding and confusion. This state of mind has a forceful effect on risk acceptance, namely it normally manifests itself as risk avoidance.

The Allied landing at Anzio, Italy on 22 January 1944, was intended to drive a wedge between the German forces holding the Allies at bay at the mouth of the Liri Valley and Rome. The Allies flung approximately 36,000 troops, as well as over 3,000 vehicles onto the beaches at Anzio, approximately 60 kilometres southeast of Rome.[91] The Germans were caught by complete surprise. Aside from a few infantry companies, who were quickly overrun, the enemy had nothing locally available to block the Allied landing or thrust inland. By noon, the Allies had engineers clearing mines and cutting exit routes through the dunes to allow men and equipment to flow inland.

Although given direction to aggressively cut the German line of retreat, unfortunately, Major General John P. Lucas, the VI Corps commander, took to heart his superior's concern that he not over-reach. The mixed messages, or poorly articulated commander's intent, resulted in a very risk averse approach by Lucas. He surrendered the initiative. The Allied timidity now gave German Field Marshal Albert Kesselring ample time to move forces into the Anzio area to hem in the Allied salient.[92] By 1700 hours that evening, the first German troops began to arrive. By the end of the day, a thin defensive crust encircled the Allied beachhead. And, it would grow stronger with every day. Within 48 hours, Kesselring amassed 24,000 troops to contain the Allied assault. By the beginning of February it became obvious that the cautious and slow Allied approach had allowed the Germans sufficient time to recover and contain the beachhead. Churchill angrily decried, "I had hoped that we would be hurling a wildcat ashore, but all we got was a stranded whale."[93] By 12 February, Kesselring had approximately 120,000 troops arrayed against the reinforced Allied bridgehead.[94] The soft underbelly had been quickly transformed into an armoured shell. In fact, the German response was so overwhelming that the initiative was reversed. The Allies now feared the prospect of being swept back out to sea.

A more recent example occurred on 4 October 2017. A platoon of Islamist militants ambushed a team of American and Nigerien soldiers near the Mali-Niger border and killed four American Special Forces soldiers, or Green Berets. The resultant fire storm of controversy on whether the mission was adequately prepared, whether it over-stepped its mandate, whether it suffered from poor planning has created an environment of risk aversion. Quite simply, the official US Strategy toward Sub-Saharan Africa has expired. With nothing to replace it, the gap in American national strategy vis-à-vis the Sahel leaves SOF leaders and operators in a vacuum

of clear direction/communication. Therefore, risk aversion reigns supreme as it is safer to do nothing, or take a minimalist approach and take less risk than use initiative and potentially risk negative consequences.[95]

Fear

Intuitively, all understand the relation between the emotion of fear and risk aversion. When someone is frightened, scared out of their wits, they are less likely to take action. Often they are paralyzed into inaction. S.L.A. Marshall in his years of studying warfare observed, "Fear is general among men . . . The majority are unwilling to take extraordinary risks and do not aspire to a hero's role."[96] A British Commando sergeant during the invasion of Juno Beach, Normandy, France on D-Day confessed, "I was so scared, all the bones in my body were shaking. I said to myself, pull yourself together, you're in charge and supposed to show an example. When the ramp went down dead on 0600 [hours], I looked around, and there were pools of water by men. It wasn't sea water."[97]

Another combat veteran from another era recounted, "Cameron could hardly keep on his feet, every step was a stagger. I thought he was wounded, but no, it was fear made him that way."[98] Another anecdote from a mercenary fighting in the Congo revealed, "A moment of panic totally flooded my senses and made me blind for a moment. It was pure fear, fear of the unknown, and my mind screamed that the rebels would capture, torture and kill us slowly."[99]

A final example is a Canadian SOF patrol in the Baghran valley in 2005. Coalition air support had been called in to suppress enemy fire. Shortly afterwards a villager approached the convoy of vehicles, cradling what he said was a dead child. He blamed the SOF patrol and warned them that if they proceeded on their current route they would come across enraged villagers, including women and children, who were bent on vengeance. Faced with the fear of potentially requiring them to engage civilians, even if only in self-defence, the patrol opted instead to take a more risk averse approach and avoid the possible confrontation. Ironically, taking this tack, actually required taking a more dangerous route through a known Taliban ambush site, thereby arguably, providing an example of how fear can also create risk acceptance.[100] They were ambushed but prevailed in the firefight.

Fatigue

Fatigue is a double-edged sword with regard to risk. As noted earlier, it can create risk acceptance, however, it can also have the opposite effect and create risk avoidance. It is often personality and situationally dependent. Psychologist F.C. Bartlett explained the impact of physical exhaustion in combat. "In war," he asserted, "there is perhaps no general condition which is more likely to produce a large crop of nervous and mental disorders than a state of prolonged and great fatigue."[101] Staff Sergeant Thomas Turner conceded, " we were all surprised to find that we had suddenly gone weak…under fire we learned that fear and fatigue are about the same in their effect on an advance."[102] Similarly, one veteran noted, "Some frightened men have spent two hours negotiating the distance, which calmer ones cover in six minutes."[103] In essence, fatigue impacts our cognitive ability. It makes concentrating difficult, slows down reaction time, impairs decision-making ability, increases errors in judgement, hampers communication skills and the ability to manage stress. In short, fatigue makes us prone to fear and risk aversion.

CONCLUSION

The great historian Hans Delbruck believed, "Great military ideas are actually extremely simple …Greatness lies in the freedom of the intellect and spirit at moments of pressure and crisis, and in the willingness to take risks."[104] However, "taking risks" is a rather nebulous concept. As explained, most people intuitively understand the concept. However, in practice, the definition, realization, impact and effect of risk are variable. Quite simply, risk is seen differently by different people. The concept of risk is a very indefinable topic. In essence, it is shaped by the perspectives of individuals, groups and/or institutions. Risk, as seen through subjective filters, can be defined as the probability of something possibly going wrong and the subsequent consequences of that outcome in the form of damage or injury (i.e. physical, reputation, financial or "political") to individuals, groups or institutions. As risk is very subjective, it is not surprising that it is difficult to measure or convey to others. Nonetheless, with a better understanding of risk, particularly the factors that lead to risk acceptance and aversion, the hope is that individuals can better navigate the complex, ambiguous contemporary security environment safely.

ENDNOTES

1 "Causes of Death in Recent Decades," <https://ourworldindata.org/causes-of-death>, accessed 17 February 2019. In fact, other common risks outweighed air travel. For instance, in the US, there were 30,000 deaths due to accidental falls; 38,000 unintentional poisoning, 16,000 homicides, 27 deaths by lightning strikes and an average of 19 fatal dog attacks each year.

2 Luiza Ch. Savage, "The return of fear on the U.S.-Canada border," *Maclean's*, 5 October 2014. <http://www.msn.com/en-ca/news/world/the-return-of-fear-on-the-us-canada-border/ar-BB7D7vU>, accessed 5 October 2014.

3 Anthony H. Cordesman, *Trends in Extremist Violence & Terrorism in Europe through End 2016*, 22 June 2012, <http://www.csis.org/burke/reports>, accessed 1 August 2017. As a comparison, in 1979 and 1980, there were 1,615 terrorist incidents in Europe that killed at least 719 people Kim Hjelmgaard, "You'd be surprised by the trend in Europe's terrorist attacks," *USA Today*, 10 July 2017, <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/world/2017/07/10/europe-terrorism-attacks-islamist-extremists/454836001/>, accessed 20 July 2017.

4 "Causes of Death in Recent Decades," <https://ourworldindata.org/causes-of-death>, accessed 17 February 2019.

5 Kim Hjelmgaard, "You'd be surprised…"

6 <https://smallwarsjournal.com/blog/study-global-terror-attacks-down-33-percent>, accessed 24 January 2019.

7 Catherine Cloutier, "How Common are skydiving accident deaths? Not Very." *Boston Globe*, 30 September 2014, <https://www.bostonglobe.com/2014/09/30/how-common-are-skydiving-accident-deaths-not-very/Rr7NltopKnJMPWy92c3SiO/story.html>, accessed 2 March 2019; and Luke Roney, "Skydiving deaths are rare," *newser,* 7 August 2016. <http://www.newser.com/story/229291/family-watched-as-18-year-old-skydiver-plummeted-to-death.html>, accessed 2 March 2019.

8 Numbers vary based on sources but they are all relatively close and small. For instance, some sources place deaths at: 2013 (59), 2014 (38), 2015 (41), 2016 (111), 2017 (50) and 2018 (16). See Paul Sitter, "Malfunction, Malfunction, Malfunction – The 2017 Fatality Summary," *Parachutist*, April 2018, <https://uspa.org/p/Article/malfunction-malfunction-malfunctionthe-2017-fatality-summary >, accessed 2 March 2019; and "Fatal Skydiving Accidents," *Dropzone.com*, <https://www.dropzone.com/fatalities/>, accessed 2 March 2019.

9 <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/risk>, accessed 11 July 2018.

10 <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/risk>, accessed 12 February 2019.

11 <http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/risk.html>, accessed 11 July 2018.

12 Dan Gardner, *Risk* (Toronto: Emblem, 2008), 75.

13 Robert Kaplan and Anette Mikes, "Managing Risks: A New Framework," *Harvard Business Review*, June 2012, <https://hbr.org/2012/06/managing-risks-a-new-framework>, accessed 11 July 2018.

14 Ibid.

15 Irving L. Janis, *Victims of Groupthink* (Houghton Mifflin Company, 1972), 60.

16 Yale University psychology professor Irving Janis defines groupthink "as a quick and easy way to refer to a mode of thinking that people engage in when they are deeply involved in a cohesive in-group, when the members' striving for unanimity override their motivation to realistically appraise alternative courses of action…Groupthink refers to a deterioration of mental efficiency, reality testing, and moral judgment that results from in-group pressures." Janis, *Victims of Groupthink*, 9.

17 Ibid. The researchers also noted that "organizational biases also inhibit our ability to discuss risk and failure. In particular, teams facing uncertain conditions often engage in *groupthink*: Once a course of action has gathered support within a group, those not yet on board tend to suppress their objections—however valid—and fall in line. Groupthink is especially likely if the team is led by an overbearing or overconfident manager who wants to minimize conflict, delay, and challenges to his or her authority."

18 Ibid., 60.

19 Ibid., 55.

20 Alternate types of risk have also been identified by scholars and business practitioners. For example, these risk categories include: financial risks, process risks, intangible risks, time risks, human risks, legal risks, and physical risks. See Mark S. Dorsman, "Risk Management," <https://hubpages.com/business/Risk-Management-and-Various-Types-of-Risk-Management>, accessed 12 February 2019.

21 Patrick K. O'Donnell, *Operatives, Spies and Saboteurs. The Unknown Story of the Men and Women of World War II's OSS* (New York: Free Press, 2004), 47.

22 Taken from: <https://rospaworkplacesafety.com/2013/01/21/what-is-a-risk-assessment/>, accessed 12 February 2019.

23 Dorsman, "Risk Management."

24 Norman Dixon, *On the Psychology of Military Incompetence* (London: Pimlico, 1994), 167.

25 General Stanley McChrystal, *Team of Teams. New Rules of Engagement for a Complex World* (New York: Penguin Kindle Edition, 2015), 209.

26 Taken from John Spacey, "8 Types of Risk Response," 2 July 2017, <https://simplicable.com/new/risk-response>, accessed 19 February 2019.

27 Gardner, *Risk*, 76-77.

28 McChrystal, *Team of Teams*, 99.

29 Idid., 15.

30 Ibid., 98.

31 Ben Shalit, *The Psychology of Conflict and Combat* (New York: Praeger, 1988), 114.

32 Thomas J. Williams, "Strategic Leader Readiness and Competencies for Asymmetric Warfare," *Parameters,* Vol. 33, No. 2 (Summer 2003): 26.

33 Dixon, *On the Psychology*, 217.

34 Ernest Jünger, *Storm of Steel* (London: Allen Lane, 2003 ed), 213.

35 Sydney J. Freedberg Jr, "Artificial Intelligence: Will Special Operators Lead The Way?" February 13, 2019, <https://breakingdefense.com/2019/02/artificial-intelligence-will-special-operators-lead-the-way/>, accessed 19 February 2019.

36 Rémy Hémez, "Tactical Surprise in Small Wars: Lessons from French Wars in Afghanistan and Mali," *Small Wars Journal*, 3 May 2017, <http//J:/Risk/Small%20Wars%20Journal%20-%20Tactical%20Surprise%20in%20Small%20Wars.pdf>, accessed 29 March 2019.

37 Major Reg Crawford, Australian SASR, Phil Mayne, "Professionals Accept High-Risk Employment," *Army*, no. 907 (27 June 1996): 3.

38 Christina Goldbaum, "U.S. Gen. Reins in Special Operations Forces in Africa After Niger Deaths and Daily Beast Investigations," *The Daily Beast*, 15 December 2017. <https://www.thedaily-beast.com/us-gen-reins-in-special-operations-forces-in-africa-after-niger-deaths-and-daily-beast-investigations>, accessed 15 January 2019.

39 See Colonel (retired) Bernd Horn, *The Wrecking Crew* (Toronto: Dundurn, 2019), 46-59. All 38 commandos were captured and became prisoners of war. The only casualty was the Italian SOE seconded linguist (who immigrated to England prior to the war) who the Italians shot as a traitor.

40 Alan Bell, "On a Wing and a Prayer – Task Force 317 and the Recapture of South Georgia Island," unpublished paper, 2014.

41 Neil Tweedie and Thomas Harding, "The Secret Falklands 'suicide mission'," *The Telegraph*, 22 March 2019, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/southamerica/falklandislands/9158097/The-secret-Falklands-suicide-mission.html>, accessed 27 January 2019. Lieutenant General Cedric Delves, then a squadron commander in the SAS later explained, "The EXOCET menace eventually grew acute. But an operation employing us to reduce the threat would have been pregnant with disproportionate risk, probably requiring a sizeable carrier task group to take forward the Squadron and its supporting helicopters, closing the Argentine mainland, bringing us all well within range of hundreds of enemy aircraft. And there could be no guarantee of nailing the objective, aircraft having a habit of moving. Nobody in his right mind would contemplate such a gamble. It was the sort of thing that could end in catastrophe and lose us the war." Lieutenant General Sir Cedric Delves, *Across an Angry Sea. The SAS in the Falklands War* (London: Hurst & Company, 2018), 115.

42 General Sir Peter De La Billiere, *Looking for Trouble. SAS to Gulf War* (London: Harper Collins Publishers, 1995), 346-347.

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44 Ibid. The aircraft and SAS "B" Squadron deployed to the staging base at Ascension Island, but the British Prime Minister did not authorize the raid in the end.

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47 William H. McRaven, *Spec Ops. Case Studies in Special Operations Warfare: Theory and Practice* (Novato, CA: Presidio, 1996), 333-380.

48 Ian Pringle, *Dingo Firestorm. The Greatest Battle of the Rhodesian Bush War* (Solihull, UK: Hellion & Company, Kindle Edition, 2012), loc 1879.

49 Ibid., loc 2324.

50 Delves, *Across an Angry Sea,* 38. The Royal Marine commander of "M" Company acknowledged, "The SAS plan to go across the Fortuna glacier was not one that either Guy [Sheridan, the land forces commander] or I thought was a particularly sensible or necessary one." James Sturcke,"The Retaking of South Georgia," *The Guardian*, 25 April 2007. <https://www.theguardian.com uk/2007/apr/25/falklands.world>, accessed 14 May 2019.

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53 Cited in Virginia Cowles, *The Phantom Major. The Story of David Stirling and the S.A.S Regiment* (London: St. James Place, 1958), 41.

54 Colonel David Stirling, "Memorandum on the Origins of the Special Air Service," in Christopher Westhorp, ed., *The SAS Pocket Manual* (London: Conway, 2015), 53.

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56 Richard Holmes, *Acts of War. The Behaviour of Men in Battle* (New York; The Free Press, 1989), 25.

57 Janis, *Victims of Groupthink*, 199.

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63 Delves, *Across an Angry Sea,* 31-32.

64 Sturcke, "The Retaking of South Georgia."

65 Ibid.

66 Dixon, *On the Psychology*, 145.

67 Ibid., 147.

68 See Cornelius Ryan, *A Bridge Too Far* (New York: Touchstone, 1995).

69 Otto Skorzeny, *Skorzeny's Special Missions. The Memoir of the "The Most Dangerous Man in Europe"* (London: Greenhill Books, 1997), 84.

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79 Ibid., 73.

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81 Delves, *Across an Angry Sea*, 82-83.

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83 At Least 23 Afghan security forces killed in Taliban attack," *Al Jazeera*, 1 March 2019, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/03/23-afghan-security-forces-killed-taliban-attack-190301171933621.html>, accessed 5 March 2019.

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86 Cited in Horn, *The Wrecking Crew*, 102.

87 Center of Military History, *Airborne Operations: A German Appraisal* CMH Publication 104-13 (Washington D.C.: US Government Publishing Office, 1989), 28. The German generals added, "it was difficult for the German Command to quickly gain an accurate picture of the situation. This resulted in the erroneous commitment of reserves. Ibid., 33.

88 Antulio J. Echevarria II, "How Should We Think about 'Gray-Zone' Wars?" *Infinity Journal,* Vol. 5, Issue 1 (Fall 2015): 16.

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94 The Allies had approximately 61,000 troops in the beachhead at the beginning of February. Major Stanley C. Waters, "Anzio - The Role of the 1st Special Service Force," *Canadian Army Journal*, Vol. 2, Nos. 5 & 6 (August-September 1948): 16-17.

95 T. Nelson Collier, "Maj. Gen. Mark Hicks, SOCAFRICA commander Special Forces at the Lion's Tail: Managing Risk in the Use of Special Operations Forces and the Application of Law," <http://smallwarsjournal.com/jrnl/art/special-forces-lions-tail-managing-risk-use-special-operations-forces-and-application-law>, accessed 31 October 2018.

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102 Colonel S.L.A. Marshall, *The Soldier's Load and the Mobility of a Nation* (Quantico, Virginia: Marine Corps Assn, 1980), 44.

103 Don Wharton, "Bringing the War to the Training Camps," *The Reader's Digest*, Vol. 42, No. 254 (June 1943): 35.

104 Cited in Montgomery Meigs, "Generalship: Qualities, Instincts, and Character," *Parameters* (Summer 2001): 4.

CHAPTER 2

STRATEGIC DECISION-MAKING IN THE DEFENCE PARADIGM

Jody Thomas

The complex and multifarious topic of risk and decision-making is truly captivating. It is a subject that I have always been interested in and confounded by, so I take any opportunity to speak about it and to learn. I define risk as the probability of something going wrong and the subsequent damage or injury to individuals, groups, institutions, or nations. That damage or injury can be physical, financial, political or reputational. While we may be able to agree on a definition, determining what actually constitutes a risk can be more subjective. It is shaped by individual, group, and institutional perspectives – making it difficult to measure.

What we can identify more clearly are categories of risk. There are two categories I that I will focus on: strategic risk and reputational risk. I consider strategic risk to be voluntary risk that is taken with the hope of high reward. No better example exists than Operation Neptune Spear, the raid to capture Osama Bin Laden in May 2011. When the American President gave the go-ahead, he accepted a huge amount of risk as the operation was filled with incredible challenges. However, the potential reward was considered worth it.

Looking to a more personal experience, strategic risk was a regular and serious concern when I served as Deputy Commissioner of Operations, and later as Commissioner, of the Canadian Coast Guard. Any time the Coast Guard responded to a search and rescue mission, there were many factors to consider: the weather, the sea state, the type of ship at risk, and the type of vessel we had available to assist. When lives are at stake, you have to be able to make difficult decisions. At what point does risking another two, four, or six lives to save three warrant the

heightened risk of acting in adverse conditions? These are not easy decisions, nor should they be when lives are on the line.

But, decisions that impact the reputation of your organization are very different. When I was Commissioner of the Coast Guard we had a large oil spill in English Bay, the large harbour in Vancouver – very public and very prominent. The Coast Guard was accused of not responding appropriately and we were the lead story on 24/7 news. I was sent to Vancouver to manage the response and keep the press up-to-date. Lives were not at stake, but livelihoods were. The environment was at stake. And the economy was at stake. That meant that in the near term, the Coast Guard was at profound risk. But this risk was reputational.

It's the kind of risk that we assess by asking questions such as "What are other people going to think about this decision and, consequently, about my organization?" There is a definite danger in focusing on those questions too much, so we balance it by asking "How much does that opinion matter in this situation?"

However, as we have discussed, risk is subjective. Different audiences will have different perceptions of the risks and results of your decisions. This is where dissonance between the civilian and military approaches to risk and decision-making can occur. The military sees risk primarily through risk to mission, risk to force, budget costs, and the ability to achieve a clear end-state, which means avoiding failure and having a clean exit strategy.

These are vital factors in a decision to deploy overseas, but they are not the only considerations. It is the Government that decides when and where the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) deploy. The Government must also balance risks and consequences related to domestic and international interests. From a domestic point of view, a decision to deploy also has to consider the public will. How will Canadians feel about a military deployment overseas? In the case of Afghanistan, we saw strong support from Canadians, even in the face of casualties. The number of people who lined the Highway of Heroes for every repatriation is proof of that. But, that support wavered when Captain Nichola Goddard was killed. She was the first Canadian woman to be killed in a combat role, and that was new and shocking to Canadians. However, the risk that a woman could die in combat does not trace back to the decision to deploy to Afghanistan in 2001. It goes back much further, to the 1988 decision to integrate women into all aspects of the Regular and Reserve

Forces. That brings me to my next point: reputational risk does not have a time limit. Decisions that we make today can have consequences weeks, months, or years down the road.

When it comes to risk and decision-making, the Canadian Special Operations Force Command (CANSOFCOM) is an interesting case. CANSOFCOM, or all SOF for that matter, provide an important military capability. Your ability to deploy rapidly into any environment, permissive or non-permissive, is incredibly valuable and provides governments with great strategic utility, based on your responsiveness, effectiveness, and discretion. That allows for an immediate response whether for non-combatant evacuation operations, to confirm ground truth or to participate in coalition operations. You deploy with a small footprint and with relatively low financial implications. In addition, the deployment of SOF is seen as a substantive contribution and commitment, despite its small size and cost.

That said, employing SOF has its fair share of risk as well. The very fact that SOF can deploy on a dime to anywhere in the world invites risk. That rapid reaction can trigger a commitment or engagement with very real consequences. There is always the danger of rushing to failure. Sometimes delay allows for introspection and second thought. Perhaps there are other mechanisms or options other than military action. Once you pull the trigger, you have often started a sequence of events, with second and third order effects, that is hard to turn back. Another concern is who you train. Are we inadvertently preparing the next tranche of coup leaders or regime enforcers? Will they follow the rules of war? If we do not take the appropriate care at the strategic level on decisions like this, then your actions, on our orders, could lead to a very real, physical risk that other members of the CAF might one day face.

Myths and negative stereotypes are another risk factor. Many people outside the Department of National Defence (DND) and the CAF – and some inside the department – do not fully understand SOF. They're fed by Hollywood blockbusters and stereotypes of out-of-control mavericks with no accountability. We all know that this is not the case, but these kinds of misperceptions mean that, sometimes, employing SOF can lead to criticism and undesirable narratives in the public domain. Because of this, and the very valid need for operational security, governments often face accusations of secrecy and a lack of transparency when it comes to SOF missions.

This matter of operational security (OPSEC) raises another issue. Quite simply your OPSEC can be a problem. Policy-makers and the public need to know who you are, what you do, and why your work is so important to the national interest. I am not suggesting that you share your tactics, or your identities, but you do need to share your accomplishments with your national society. That knowledge will help build trust – trust that you need if you are going to be able to manage risk appropriately.

In closing, the fact that the SOF community is taking time to study, discuss, write on, as well as share knowledge and experience on such important topics as risk and decision-making can be seen as a method of risk mitigation. The better we all comprehend the nature of risk and its consequences, as well as how it can and does impact our decision-making, the better we will all be at navigating the complex and ambiguous operating environment we find ourselves in.

CHAPTER 3

THE RISK OF FAILING TO EVOLVE AND THE COST OF IRRELEVANCE

Lieutenant-General (Retired) D. Michael Day

As Western Nations continue to struggle with a rapidly changing conflict environment the tools available to them to intercede, in a macro sense, remain unchanged. Today's governments have the same set of tools as were available to their predecessors: Diplomatic, Economic and Military. But the manner in which these elements are used and combined has continued to evolve. What also remains unchanged, regardless of their application, is that the metric of the efficacy of these tools remains based on their relevance to any given situation. Applicability and therefore relevancy are the core values and as a consequence must remain at the heart of any decision regarding capability maintenance and future development. Should Special Operations Forces (SOF) wish to remain relevant in meeting the constantly evolving challenge the future presents they must continue to progress their capability sets in response to the changing demands for different missions. Failure to do so will consign SOF to lie alongside the outdated Cavalry charges of the First and Second World Wars and the famous British "Thin Red Line" of the Crimean War. In short, SOF will be destined to get thrown on the trash heap of military history.

This history is not the contrived Hollywood image of SOF super humans that is cultivated for posters, movies and recruiting, but one of adaption to need. Although wrongly accredited to Charles Darwin, history demonstrates, "It is not the strongest of the species that survives, nor the most intelligent, but the one most responsive to *change*."[1] A reasonable criticism of conventional military forces' traditional view is that they continue to conceive of the future through a lens looking backwards. Too often military tribes perpetuate capabilities that appear to reflect a desire to build a

"Better Yesterday." They have reason to do so as with the demonstratable excellence of past performances in conflict there is an understandable reluctance to deviate from that path in the future, not the least of which is the motivating and associated cost of failure in both the coin and more importantly the blood of the realm.

Furthermore, within the conventional forces capabilities, which are mostly based on large, multi-generational platforms, this structure makes abrupt and constant changes difficult, often impossible to implement. This dynamic in the conventional forces does not reflect either the origins of SOF capability, nor current practices. Nonetheless, SOF must continue to perpetuate not just a "Relentless Pursuit of Excellence" but equally a "Relentless Pursuit of Evolution" to ensure relevance.

Core to the creation of a SOF lens for constant appropriate evolution is a common understanding of what relevance actually means. Once defined, it can be used to measure and assess future capability options to determine their relative value and the opportunity cost of development. From this perspective relevance can be considered from three different perspectives:

> Strategic Relevance: The ability to, or an act that, directly impact(s) or contributes to National Policy Objectives;
>
> Operational Relevance. The ability to, or an act that, directly impact(s) or contributes to the successful prosecution of a Theatre Level Plan; and
>
> Tactical Relevance: The tactics/techniques/procedures that are suitable to meet the tactical challenges of the moment (i.e. how best the tactical "engagement" can be won in pursuit of Operational Objectives).

As such, if Relevance is the touchstone it must also be recognized that SOF personnel themselves exert their own influence on both capability development and capacity in a way that is significantly different from more conventional forces. SOF individuals commonly have high expectations of "adding value" which has been a central part of the attraction of service in SOF units. Indeed, for many, having impact on the future of their organization, what it does and how it does it, is a central motivator to their service. In this light, a fourth element of Relevance must be considered:

> Human Relevance: Reflected by the personal assessment of "What I do is valuable. The costs I am paying are balanced by the difference I think I am

making and the satisfaction I gain from what I am doing. Furthermore, I have confidence that this will continue going forward."

It should go without saying, but important nonetheless, in refining the relevance lens of assessing capability development, that future SOF activities do not necessarily need to meet all elements of relevance. In fact, there will often be times where the "relevance equation" might well put one element in conflict of the other, such as when the perfect tactical resolution of a situation is, rightfully, inhibited, by an understanding that certain tactical practices (tactics, techniques and procedures (TTPs)) might actual diminish the strategic relevance of the mission itself. What is critical is to see and evaluate the whole, not merely individual parts. To assist in this evaluation, SOF leaders must remain focused on core mandates and what SOF capability represents to their nation.

In this vein, a nation's SOF are created, maintained, trained, equipped, and employed with the goal of achieving, or contributing to, a national objective or a strategic effect. Everything else is not only secondary, but such a distant second as to be dismissed if it interferes with the strategic imperative. Within this paradigm it is crucial to remember that those activities to which SOF might gravitate naturally through either predisposition or natural extension of current activities are not *necessarily* those which should be considered for further development or perhaps not pursued in their current form. Hard truths need to recognized and accepted.

This perspective is worth emphasizing. Because we can, or because we enjoy, doing something does not mean we should do it.

Two reasons compel this needed ruthlessness in making decisions. Firstly, there are sometimes other less costly, and frankly less specialized troops, that might be able to achieve the same objective. Secondly, SOF are constrained by very finite capacity meaning that every decision to allocate time, money and most importantly personnel is by extension a decision to not commit those irreplaceable assets somewhere else. By maintaining a clear focus on the various aspects of relevance, as cited above, SOF can ensure they retains the necessary institutional level support needed to continue to develop.

Institutional support is an outcome of the strategic and operational effects; essentially it is an evaluation based on a demonstrated performance that a specific

capability is considered a viable policy and employment option for the most difficult tasks. This contribution in turn is reflected in the ability to gain the assets and support sufficient to meet currently assigned tasks and potential future tasks; have an influential voice in the employment (i.e. type, time and space) of assigned forces; and the ability to impact policy and strategy development to ensure that "do-ability" is considered an essential element of any broader conversation.

In aiming to achieve this multi-tiered relevance and impact, SOF often claim that their best ambassadors are the men and women on the ground. This assertion is true but can only remain true if they are armed with the ability to make tough decisions on individual actions that are appropriate and relevant, in essence prioritizing the national good. Sometimes avoiding a tactical engagement is a winning strategy. Sometimes engaging in a tactical engagement, even when won (the expected standard), has severe and negative consequences. United States Marine Corps General Charles Krulak's notion of the "Strategic Corporal" is a much over-used concept and most often ill-used, but as it applies to deployed SOF elements it absolutely captures the essence and consequence of on-the-ground decision-making.[2]

Among the multitude of challenges facing SOF, and indeed any military force, in maintaining relevance most stem from the reality that the operating environment evolves faster than both operational and strategic plans. Moreover, the operating environment evolves faster that than the national authorities can recognize, let alone are capable of adjusting for. This reality has the potential to leave tactical forces sub-optimally prepared by either lacking the tools, or authorities, to achieve the desired end-state. It is critical to have constant assessment by on the ground junior leaders to ensure there isn't a blind execution of a mission that is, potentially, no longer contributing to a national objective, or if still relevant, not attainable by the capability deployed. Embedded in most nation's SOF ethos is a core determination to make things work or "to find a way" and it is recognized that most of the solutions of moving forward and adapting comes from individuals internal to SOF organizations.[3]

But, herein also lies a potential pitfall as with world class excellence (combined with the admittedly ego inflating reputation that goes with this status) comes a natural reaction to reinforce and do more of what earned that position and influence to begin with. The delicate balance of what to maintain and move on from is fraught with risk as abandoning everything is as equally high-risk as failing to evolve. In

all environments it must be recognized that there is a reasonable, in fact a needed, caution in changing things that have not only worked but have been done so in a way that has minimized risk not just to mission success but as importantly to the lives and safety of those involved. As Admiral (retired) Bill McRaven so clearly identified, the foundational success of SOF missions is more often than not "a simple plan, carefully concealed, repeatedly and realistically rehearsed, and executed with surprise, speed and purpose."[4] The ability to do so relies, in no small part, on the repetitive nature of rehearsals so that decisions and actions become almost automatic in their processing. Constant change interferes with that learned ability and leadership decisions must constantly weigh all of these factors where time has a way of changing friends and foes.

It is here, in the reluctance to change current practices, that the path to potential vulnerability of irrelevance starts. It is simply a consequence of a lack of situational awareness or sensitivity to competing objectives leading to a failure to recognize or assess a potential need for change. On operations the tactical consequences can often be anticipated, and missteps can often be corrected quickly and normally compensated for in the normal ebb and flow of a dynamic operating environment. At the institutional level, and when addressing future needs, the consequences of failing to change has the potential to result in a stagnation of capabilities.

More dangerously, this same lack of vision may result in a misallocation of time, people, money and effort towards those capabilities which have no strategic relevance. With finite resources, people and time these decisions are difficult to undo and normally impossible to recover from in the short term. Layered onto this complexity is the reality that most capability decisions within national SOF commands are conceived of and enacted without real comprehension from perspectives external to SOF but accepted nonetheless based on trust and a proven track record of appropriate, measured evolution.

This trust is a wonderfully empowering factor but comes with the obligation of constantly being right. The relevance/irrelevance equation is a cruel standard and more often than not is one of a binary nature. If SOF elements are considered irrelevant to the issues of the day, naturally, they are increasingly deemed to be unimportant or non-essential. Lacking the big platform-centric capital programs that maintain the interest of governments, given the obvious economic impacts, SOF rely on having a fungible policy currency. Furthermore, this spiral of irrelevance continues

based on a loss of confidence in SOF's ability to perform. A state is then deprived of a capability that previously it enjoyed and/or the state potentially starts to employ SOF in a manner ill-suited to their skills sets, resulting in risk exposure for less valuable activities.

There is an internal impact as well. As SOF personnel recognize this cycle their sense of personal relevance becomes diminished and these high functioning individuals look for other avenues in which to apply their talents.

As with all military elements, when facing this challenge SOF must address a continuous decision cycle in determining how much of today's capacity should be devoted to identifying, developing and refining new capabilities and how much should be preserved to serve current needs. The Army, Navy and Air Force platform-based capabilities allow for, and indeed require, longer lead times for the evolution of current capabilities or the introduction of new ones. SOF's main platform, however, is the individual and the capability set is focused on that individual's adaptability and agility in responding to, and meeting, new challenges where incremental and constant change is the order of the day. As a consequence, national SOF commands must invoke a capability development model that cycles faster than conventional peers and one that accounts for constant flux and adjustment. This requirement is, in part, based on the types of operating environments in which SOF is likely to find themselves, including the standard demand to look beyond normal threat analysis, comprised of the classic state model as well as the increasingly important non-state actor paradigm.

As such, surveying, and understanding the operating environment with a wider lens allows for a more informed perspective to be gained. Although doubtlessly spawning allergic reactions from the part of the internal SOF audience who see themselves as "Direct Action Warriors," reality suggests that if the likes of anthropologists, sociologists and economists etc., do not play an influencing role in identifying what capabilities would be most value added, then the capabilities will at best be incomplete and at worst be irrelevant. Relevant literature such as counter-insurgency expert David Kilcullen's *The Accidental Guerrilla*[5] and *Out of the Mountains,*[6] as well as former infantry officer John Nagl's *Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife*[7] all more than suggest a widening, not a narrowing, of perspectives is needed.

Addressing the allergic reaction to this widening of focus and from those who claim this approach would deviate from the core skill set of "shoot, move, communicate" one need look no further than the increasing sophistication of targeting cycles and those individuals and situations SOF seek to influence to provide the context for the need for constant evolution. Much has been learned since 9/11 terrorist attacks in New York in terms of collecting, analyzing, disseminating and acting on focused intelligence, but this is a dynamic process which SOF can never afford to have frozen in time.

Understanding the consequences of decisions and actions while operating in at risk, failing or failed states[8] will continue to be essential to ensure that SOF remain outcome and effect focused as opposed to target centric as a result of being too narrowly focused in their perspectives. Incorporating these new intellectual domains into an understanding of the operating environment has the immediate benefit of allowing for a more acute understanding of how to achieve or contribute to national objectives which in turn will inform the development of capabilities that allow for rapid retooling of TTPs, operational approaches and even strategic guidance thereby ensuring impact and therefore relevance.

Although it is relatively easy to create a narrative reinforcing the importance of preserving relevance and the avoidance of irrelevance it is, clearly, a more difficult task to enact such an approach. At the core of this needed adjustment lies the four "Es" of Educate – Empower – Expose – Employ. Having at the very core of every professional development opportunity the concept of relevance brings a mindfulness to this issue that eventually inculcates a generational impact for SOF culture.

At the front end of this cultural evolution and change cycle is a firm educational grounding in how not just SOF operations impact national strategies but how individual decisions influence events. Laying out these connections in clear terms, such as in Dr. Emily Spencer, the Director of the Canadian Special Operations Forces Command (CANSOFCOM) Education and Research Centre (ERC), book *Thinking for Impact*,[9] it emphasizes not only the importance of their decisions, but the book also provides a construct which can be adopted to support that decision-making.

Armed with not just training but education,[10] SOF leaders need to be empowered to perform accordingly. This is best initiated by adopting scenario-based preparations that work to anticipate the potential developments and in turn provide the

authority for SOF leaders to make decisions to address the delicate balance between addressing on the ground demands while remaining focused on strategic impact and national objectives. Notwithstanding a system that looks forward and arms and prepares SOF leaders, experience reminds us all that not everything and sometimes very few things can wholly be anticipated. Constant exposure to a larger context and how the strategic situation is developing allows for deployed SOF leaders to constantly assess their actions, against not just the tactical situation they face but also take into consideration the consequence of their decisions and actions on their core mission.

Finally, the development of the mission sets and tasks need to be based on the construct of educate, empower and expose by employing SOF elements in ways that take advantage of their heightened awareness of the larger context and their commensurate ability to adjust their actions accordingly.

However valuable implementing this approach might be, this evolution of the Four "Es" is insufficient in and of itself. Beyond the tactical application and their consequences, a key element of this multi-level and generational education requirement is a formal process of assessment and constant review. This approach is not to suggest that SOF retool every year or faster, but rather that there is a conscious, deliberate, command-driven view of the strategic environment and its consequences. Unlike many of the invaluable and necessary force development processes this cannot be limited to a key element of the staff and command teams, but rather must be shared broadly to not just reinforce the education pillar but to empower all ranks as they strive to contribute to the development of future capability sets.

With a clear nod to the historic roots of the SOF community it must be recognized that many of the essential core capabilities have resulted from a bottom up development process. This is reflective of, and reinforces, the adaptive SOF culture as well as recognizes that the rank and file of elite SOF teams are filled with individuals who are blessed with the ability to understand and react to demand in ways that more conventional forces might not normally possess. In addition to ensuring the capability development is focused on maintaining strategic relevance it has the added benefit of contributing to the personal relevance requirement that is so essential to attracting and holding the type of individual that is central to SOF success. All of these adjustments: understanding the changing environment; inculcating the necessary focus on maintenance of relevance; to formalizing review

processes; and harvesting innovation and excellence from the tactical levels; starts with the leadership.

The leadership, most especially in the "Five-Eyes" Community, has worked hard to address evolution of capability as evidenced by the much more sophisticated targeting philosophy.[11] Eighteen years ago in the opening days of Afghanistan it was deemed sufficient, and invaluable, to remove bad actors from the battlefield. This need still exists, but by itself is no longer an activity that distinguishes SOF, nor is it enough to meet national objectives. More often than not capabilities such as Influence Operations are central, as evidenced by the work in the Philippines.[12] These types of operations require SOF members who are acutely sensitized to the impact of their tactical decisions. At the institutional level, targeting the professional development of SOF operators creates a capability to effectively operate in those types of challenging environments, demonstrates current day relevance and, more broadly, SOF's ability to adapt to meet changing demands.

For SOF elements, relevance must remain the key determinant in considering not just tactical and operational employment actions, but wider institutional capability development decisions. Although there is a challenge of operating environments evolving faster than national policies or strategic plans, what does not change nearly so quickly are National Priorities or Strategic Objectives. Preparing SOF personnel in such a way as to be able to react to this everchanging dynamic allows for a continued focus on serving the strategic imperatives. Key to this is the education-empower-expose-employ continuum that ensures SOF personnel have the intellectual tools to adapt. Widening the education component by a broader understanding of many of the factors at play better equips SOF members to ensure that they are able, to the best extent possible, to balance the tactical demands of the moment against the operational and strategic context. Inculcating such a development is not a step change for any nation's SOF, it merely is the next step in the ongoing and necessary evolution of SOF capability that is central to providing a government the tools it requires. To maintain relevance in serving those national objectives, SOF must adapt. The key, as it always has been, is to rely on our people and prepare them for the challenges they will face.

ENDNOTES

1 Although attributed to Charles Darwin from the *Descent of Man* it appears nowhere in that text. See <https://quoteinvestigator.com/2014/05/04/adapt/>, accessed 5 May 2019.

2 General Charles C. Krulak, "The Strategic Corporal: Leadership in the Three Block War," *Marines Magazine*, January 1999, <http://www.au.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/usmc/strategic_corporal.htm>, accessed 2 May 2019. In essence, Krulak argued that the tactical actions, deliberate ormistake, of a soldier on operations could have a strategic impact due to the globalization and speed of information.

3 As reflected by the Canadian Special Operations Forces Command Motto "*Viam Inveniemus*" which translates to "We Will Find a Way."

4 William H. McRaven, *Spec Ops: Case Studies in Special Operations Warfare: Theory and Practice* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1996).

5 David Kilcullen, *The Accidental Guerilla* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

6 David Kilcullen, *Out of the Mountains* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

7 John Nagl, *Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2005).

8 "The Failed States Index," *Foreign Policy*, No. 161 (2007): 54-63.

9 Dr. Emily Spencer, *Thinking for Impact: A Practical Guide for Special Operations Forces* (Kingston: CANSOFCOM Education and Research Center, 2018).

10 In this context "training" is designed to result in a set response to a specific stimulus, whereas "education" is designed to provide the skills needed to collect and assess information in order to devise appropriate solutions to problem sets.

11 "Five-Eyes" refers to the close relationship and intelligence sharing of Australia, Canada, New Zealand, United Kingdom and the United States.

12 Thomas M. Scanzillo and Edward M. Lopacienski, *Influence Operations and the Human Domain,* Centre for Irregular Warfare and Armed Groups (C*IWAG)* Case Study, 2015.

CHAPTER 4

ALL RISK IS POLITICAL: THE GAIN OR LOSS OF POWER

Dr. Richard Rubright

During the 2018 SOF Symposium on "Risk & Decision-Making" one of the most striking impressions appeared to be a tacit common understanding of what risk is but without a common vocabulary in which to relate it in a universal manner. What follows here is the author's attempt to bring a common framework for understanding risk while being universally applicable and timeless. This has the inevitable effect of reflecting the personal preferences of the author within a relative view of what is well understood. Therefore, it is incumbent on this work to justify the assertions made and the stances taken for a particular relativistic viewpoint. If this work is done properly then the view should be tolerably defendable. That judgement though, is solely in the hands of the reader.

Common understanding and clarity of subject and purpose can be challenging, especially so when dealing with a topic as large as "Risk and Decision-Making." In running the risk of sounding exceedingly banal and pedantic, it is helpful to ask what is "risk" within the context of national security and military thinkers? The answer can be reliably rendered in recitation of a dictionary definition such as, "The possibility of meeting danger or harm or loss, exposure to this."[1] Yet, a straight definition does not capture the full meaning to organizations and people. Risk may be the exposure to danger, but that exposure is only the beginning of a person's calculus about risk. The mission to kill Osama Bin Laden was "risky" for many people but for many different reasons. For the President of the United States the risk could be defined as reputational. For United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) the risk could be classified as organizational. For Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC) there was risk to assets and force structure.

For the operators there was risk to life or well-being operating in another sovereign country without consent. Understanding that there is danger is only the first part of understanding risk.

Different industries also classify and label risk in specific ways. The ever-present individual, business or sovereign credit ratings or scores are numeric representations of danger a lender exposes themselves to if they choose to lend monies; it represents the risk involved. All investment return rates are tied to varying levels of risk. Public services must judge risk in determining forest management priorities such as controlled burning of undergrowth, fire rescue equipment replacement, coastal patrol and rescue resources and emergency response resources for natural disasters as a few examples. Law enforcement and a criminal justice system must manage risk of offenders being released into public after incarceration, adequate home arrest monitoring, proper training of officers, protecting civil rights as well as enforcing laws. All of the examples above should make it clear that in a very cursory glance at a modern western society risk and the management of risk is an everyday occurrence across a wide swath of private and public entities. This author would argue that other societies may not resemble a western model, but they will have no fewer or less complex processes for managing and understanding risk.

The central issue then when examining risk is a common understanding within a context of national security that can also translate to other entities or organizations. In mathematical terms it can be considered an issue of like terms. A common understanding, if not in vernacular, then at least in meaning that is deeper than a cursory definition allows a deeper appreciation for and context when approaching the subject of risk and decision-making. To that end the most appropriate commonality is to understand that all risk is political in nature and the common currency of loss or gain is that risk represents a threat to power.

A strict definitional understanding of politics starts with the pursuit of power usually in order to govern.[2] The term govern can be very loosely defined. Governing in a corporate structure is different than in a traditional governmental structure. But at a root or base level they are the same thing because they represent the utilization of power in their respective milieus to enforce one's will to alter the behaviour of people.[3]

In both cases the ability to govern is directly tied to the exercise of power. The more power an individual garners the more that individual is able to enforce their will

within a structure. The structure is not always indicative of who has actual power. Likewise, different departments in either a corporate or governmental structure may wield more or less power dependent upon many factors. For example, in the United States both the Secretary of State and the Secretary of Defense are Cabinet level positions. Both positions are expected to provide advice to the President of the United States and should be considered equal. However, that does not mean the individuals in both positions wield the same amount of power. Variables such as the personal relationships of each individual with the President can greatly influence the amount of power the Secretaries wield. Likewise, the relationships of the Secretaries to congressional leaders can also alter the calculus of power. If an observer was schooled in civics, that observer would determine the Secretaries were equal, while an observer schooled in politics would see something unequal. More on civics versus politics later.

If we understand that every context is political in nature then it follows that every decision is influenced by power. Some may argue that not every context is political. However, that observation would be quite wrong. Organizations and institutions are living entities and behave like individuals because they are run by people. People by their very nature cannot help but be political. As Aristotle noted 2300 years ago, people are political animals;[4] it is part and parcel of who humans are and it is hard-wired into us at a genetic level for survival. We all try to garner more power because it makes us more secure. This is exactly why services fight over resources, colonels want to be generals, associate professors want to be full professors, vice presidents want to be presidents and generally everyone wants to have more control. In essence, power is the currency of security both individually and organizationally.

When risk and decision-making is considered in sober terms of power and politics rather than pretending it is for the good of the force, the right thing to do, or even feigning some altruistic façade, we can evaluate if it is rational. When it is clear that the decision is being made for purely selfish reasons without any benefit to a larger mission or objective, we can then check ourselves and realize our decision and risk calculus is becoming inherently detrimental. For example, at one organization the author wanted to write about a way forward for SOF to start thinking and developing a Special Operation Forces (SOF) component to the proposed Space

Force. There are many organizational and operational reasons to do this. One recommendation was to outsource the design, research and development work to a specific organization that had complete autonomy to think outside of the box, zero restrictions on procurement, total freedom to support research & development (R&D) in private business, national laboratories and academia, and had established connections throughout the aerospace community in business, government and academia. Any attempt to write such a suggestion was greeted with a threat of termination and a demand that no such ideas would ever be written. The threats were made by a former Air Force officer who felt it would offend USSOCOM and the Air Force. In this case, the risk was negligible as it would have been the opinion of a single academic. But the decision-making was so overwhelmed by a person's purely selfish reason that they would be held responsible for an orthodoxly contrary opinion that the individual would rather see no progress on an important topic than incur any amount of risk. Decision-making can be selfish and to think it should never be so, is to be unrealistic. However, if the decision-making in this case was also measured as having to be productive, as well as selfishly protecting the individual's power, then it failed as a litmus test. Risk should never be avoided to solely protect an individual or organization's power or political position, as progress and opportunities will be consequently missed.

The above example is telling as it illustrates that it is acceptable to be selfish *to a point*. Risk can cost an individual power and the ability to progress professionally within a given political environment. In many cases this approach results in a "do nothing" mentality among government workers. Yet, risk is connected to reward. The former Air Force officer could have easily deflected blame to the author who wrote the work under the principle of academic freedom. The gain would have been a discussion and possible avenue to the future development of a SOF Space Force for the United States. The risk versus reward calculus always has a possible upside and downside, and selfish political/power considerations will always be at play. However, leaders need to be able to see just beyond what it means for them if it goes wrong. If leaders cannot intellectually grasp the possible upside and are mired solely in the possible personal downside, they should be replaced. Dissonance occurs when we tolerate managers who do not weigh both the positive and the negative.

Organizations being run by people act like individuals. This is not meant to literally personify organizations. Rather, the people in an organization tend to look

after the organization just as they look after their own well-being. In many cases this attitude is because the welfare of the individual and their coworkers is tied to the welfare of the organization. A telling analogy is one of a ship at sea. Each individual on the ship is first and foremost concerned with their own well-being and survival. The concern cannot be absolute as the fate of the ship is tied to individual safety. If an organization loses influence, relevance or gravitas then it is likely the organization will suffer as the always finite resources available are divided in a way that is not advantageous. In short, the organization loses power as the ability to influence or impose its will becomes diminished. The organization, like people, seeks to gain political leverage; it pursues power because it is more likely to survive. The more people a company can serve, the more secure it will become; a monopoly being the most secure under circumstances where monopolies are tolerated. In essence, like passengers on a ship, people in organizations must manage risks for themselves and the organization in a symbiotic relationship or both the individual and the organization may sink in the constant struggle for power.

Having laid the groundwork for why there is a commonality of politics and power in all organizations and personal decision-making there does need to be one point that is clarified. There is a difference between politics, political science and civics, and the implications for actual decision-making are enormous when examining risk as loss or gain in power. This point is so important it explicitly needs to be made. The study of all three subjects is closely linked but clearly delineated. The study of politics is the study of the function of government, or how those in an organization wield power to achieve ends.[5] The study of political science is the study of governance as a whole and is a huge subject. The study of civics is the study of the rights and responsibilities of citizens in a particular form of government.[6] These differences should be clear and stressed because the nuances have a direct impact upon decision-making in the realm of strategy and the operationalization of military planning. Political science is too large a field to expect anyone to comprehensively incorporate into decision-making. Western Liberal civics is too narrow a subject to have universal relevance in strategy given the idiosyncrasies of different cultural contexts. The study of politics is deeply important for anyone formulating or executing a strategy or operations. It also happens to be a subject the US military is woefully unprepared to integrate into its thinking and planning. It should be kept in mind that the three subjects are separate, and when the author says the commonality of politics and power is ubiquitous as a common baseline in all risk and decision-making, it means politics and the corresponding currency of politics being power.

At this point it might be most helpful to illustrate the assertions above with a couple of examples before moving on to operational considerations and specific implications for SOF. The examples will focus on high-level political appointees in government and high level business positions because they easily illustrate the points. This should not, however, be taken to mean the principles do not scale to lower echelons within an organization.

President Obama in 2008 decided to take a fresh look at the US Afghanistan strategy with a clear intention to start winding down the conflict. To that end he repeatedly asked his military advisors for options and divergent views on the conflict in Afghanistan. After months of deliberating and numerous rounds of different recommendations the President was extremely frustrated as he felt that the Department of Defense (DoD) was not giving him any new options when they kept recommending troop increases which was not what the President desired.[7] This put the President in an awkward position. The President, who had no military experience himself, knew he would have a difficult political road ahead of him if he chose to go against the advice of his military advisors. After almost nine months of deliberations on the subject someone leaked the recommendations from DoD for troop increases to the press.[8] Likely the leak was to pressure the President to acquiesce to the generals' desires to fight the conflict the way the military leadership thought best. From the President's perspective his military advisors were painting him into a corner and leaving him with no viable options or choices, which was close to insubordination and directly contrary to the principle of civilian control of the military.[9] This episode had the unfortunate effect of negatively impacting the President's relationship with DoD for the rest of his tenure as president.

Technically, no one did anything wrong in the summation of the Afghanistan strategy review during the Obama Administration. However, when we look at the episode through the lens of risk and decision-making with a specific eye toward an interpretation of politics and power the episode demonstrates very clearly the dangers of not being cognizant of the politics and power connection in risk analysis. The President's position was made very clear during his time campaigning for the Presidency; he wanted to wind down foreign wars. While DoD did get a troop increase that it desired, the President ended up telegraphing our intentions to the enemy by stating that US forces would start to withdraw by 2011.[10] So the short-term success of a surge was followed by the strategic failure of a known timed pullout allowing our adversary to be confident that strategic patience would bring

them eventual victory. More importantly, for DoD, the loss of trust from the Oval Office meant that the power of DoD was diminished. The episode cost politically in the form of influence (wasta) in the most important policy forum that counts. The corresponding loss of power to influence decisions cascaded throughout the Obama administration, leaving the Department of State a much more powerful voice in foreign affairs.

In essence, DoD made a decision on the issue of strategy for Afghanistan without fully appreciating or incorporating the political risks they were incurring, and it cost in the currency that matters, power. If they had focused beyond civics and their responsibility to provide the best military advice and considered also what was the best advice on Afghanistan AND best advice to keep DoD at the table to impact future discussions, they would have fared better. DoD displayed the opposite perspective of the aforementioned retired Air Force officer. DoD didn't focus enough on what was good for the organization. Some who read this will likely say, those kind of political machinations are not appropriate for involvement by the Department of Defense. That is both naive and unrealistic as politically unaware military operations are foolhardy and ignore the very important Clausewitzian principle – "war is an extension of politics" (politics by other means if one prefers).[11]

As a second example of the commonality of translating risk and decision-making into politics and power the recent replacement of General Electrics (GE) Chief Executive Officer (CEO) stands out. After 10 months on the job as CEO, John Flannery was replaced by the Board of Directors. Flannery was a lifelong GE employee who had risen through the ranks of the company and was steeped in the GE culture. He was chosen to right a ship that was rapidly sinking. GE was once the most valuable company in the United States and an icon of American capitalism and innovation. The company is able to trace its lineage back to Thomas Edison and was one of the original members of the Dow Jones Industrial Average stock market index.

But the company had fallen on hard times. The share price had fallen from over $30 a share to almost $11. The company's pension debt was out of control as was its balance sheet. GE Financial was facing investigations by the US Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) for subprime mortgage fraud and GE Power was losing money.[12] As Flannery took control as CEO he spent months examining the company, formulating a plan, and then very slowly executing it. Changes were

to be methodical. Having grown up in GE he didn't want to rock the boat while attempting to right the ship. He explored sell offs of GE companies to raise cash to help the balance sheet, but execution was slow. He did interviews after earnings reports and highlighted potential bad news without any glowing news of how the turnaround had started to change GE's fortunes. The whole time Flannery was at the helm of GE the share price kept inexorably dropping. Finally, Flannery was fired as CEO and replaced by a dynamic outsider named Larry Culp who promised to move quickly and with decisive action.[13]

In short, Flannery lost his power because he was risk adverse. The Board of Directors at GE then moved to replace him through their political prerogative to govern the company in the best interest of the shareholders. Flannery was not just in an economic struggle to right the company, he was in a political struggle to maintain power, which was the baseline to be effective in his job.

"SO WHAT?" FOR SOF

Translating risk and decision-making into a universal common denominator of politics and power is nothing more than a pedantic academic exercise if it holds no meaning for practical application. Further, given the concerns in the SOF communities of at least two nations as a result of the conference, the applicability must be made clear for the respective SOF communities. The "so what?" question in all strategic studies remains as vital in this context, as in any other, lest this work not be worth the reader's time. Fundamentally, every SOF operator should be able to agree that their chosen profession entails a certain degree of risk and risks need to be minimized. However, the need to minimize risk is not absolute. Risks need to be tolerable, reduced to a level in which the prospective gains make the risk worth the potential downside. This balance is the classic risk benefit calculus that in warfare is a subjective judgement call made regularly by commanders. However, we should be asking ourselves if we are looking at risk the correct way and measuring the risk calculus appropriately.

Let the author start with a premise upon which everything else must follow when we are dealing with SOF and risk. War is an extension of politics, period. While SOF may be engaged in many indirect aspects of helping a partner nation, risk is most often involved in conflict. Whether there is a conflict in a host nation, or not,

it is always a political act to deploy military forces. In actual warfare, in the practice of war, politics is always present. It is impossible to separate politics from either war or from any sort of human to human conflict. As such it is not appropriate that SOF be ignorant of politics.

In the case of the Canadian and American SOF communities it is almost wholly appropriate to say they should not be engaged in domestic politics, but that is a far different aspect than to say they should not be educated and knowledgeable about politics. The absolute baseline being that politics is the pursuit of power to govern and the power is the ability to make another conform to one's will. The study of civics (the role and responsibilities of citizens) will not suffice. For example, how would a SOF operator know what the role and responsibility of an Afghan citizen is in Afghan politics if they do not understand the politics of Afghanistan? To say that all Afghans should vote may be overlooking some very important facets of that citizenry's motivations and therefore counter-motivations to help US/Canadian SOF. Does that Afghan have a responsibility to a clan or tribe that supersedes a responsibility to a local governor? Does that Afghan citizen have a religious responsibility that supersedes their tribal affiliations? Both of these questions are concerned with not only politics but also power.

The following is an example of a strategic-level conundrum that the United States put itself into in Afghanistan because it does not look at politics and power honestly, and, this very much affects SOF. Rather than establishing a Tribal Confederacy in Afghanistan after removing the Taliban from power, the United States accepted the Liberal dogma that everyone will love Liberalism if exposed to it and in essence Western Liberal Democracy is so good that it sells itself. With the establishment of a central government came the establishment of regional governors. Those governors represented the new Afghan regime that also had the (nominally) Afghan National Army and the Afghan National Police as forces to call upon. This in essence diluted the power of the tribal elders in a given region. As the Australian counter-insurgency expert David Kilcullen points out, one of the first things the Al-Qaeda, and the Taliban to an extent, would do when taking control of an area was to elevate the local mullahs in stature over the tribal elders in order to bolster the insurgents' legitimacy.[14] This also diluted the power of the tribal elders. So rather than bolster the wasta of the tribal elders by instituting a Tribal Confederacy and counter Al-Qaeda on a political level, the United States introduced a foreign governing system that further diluted the power of the tribal elders, who were

exactly the people needed to fight Al-Qaeda. The United States induced strategic risk through our decision-making process. Or, another way to look at it is that US power was diminished by not understanding the political context and then demanding SOF go get the tribal elders to work with coalition forces.

The power and political risk calculation need not be strategic. It can happen very much at the tactical level and echo up quite easily to the strategic and political levels of war. Take for example the hunt for Pablo Escobar. After the downing of Avianca flight 203 with two US citizens on board it was determined that the United States would make an example of Mr. Escobar as a warning to other narco kingpins.[15] He was hunted down and killed.[16] A large part of the effectiveness of the campaign, however, came from a shadowy Colombian group, Los Pepes, which seemed to use intelligence supplied by the United States to Colombia. Los Pepes used brutal tactics such as torture, extrajudicial killings, and targeting family members to systematically tear down Escobar's organization.[17] The risk was profound that the United States could be linked to Los Pepes, although only in rumor as there has never appeared to be any direct connection. A serious and credible connection could have had tremendous ramification in US domestic politics all emanating from the hunt for a single man. It is not an exaggeration to say power would have dramatically shifted in the US government, congressional action could have followed and the political ramifications for the Republicans could have been painful.

These historical vignettes may be helpful but this lens should also be turned toward the future. If SOF do not fully grasp that war is an extension of politics, both domestically but in the host country as well, *and then actually study it*, they cannot be expected to perform to their potential. More importantly, with knowledge must come a wide latitude to interpret the commander's intent. What happens when a SOF team must make a choice between helping a local tribal leader to win his loyalty (perhaps just for a time) at the expense of a local governor's power? The State Department may not know the reality on the ground, the commanders may or may not appreciate the situation. What if SOF teams are capable of recognizing and exploiting local opportunities to bring harmony between the strategic, operational and tactical levels of war by shifting power within a political context on their own? Can commanders give them the leeway to act, or is that too much risk to the commander's power in the politics of military hierarchy?

Can commanders endure the risk to their power and political position by truly engaging in the host nation's political context? How about negotiating a blood feud settlement that furthers operational objectives in which one tribe trades women to another? That is risk to the commander's power but is also a potential to display power and be a power broker in a political context that is considered legitimate in the host nation in some places. If commanders considered places like Wanat, Keating and Ranch House not in terms of risk to men but in terms of political risk exposure in domestic politics, would there have been more emphasis on closer air weapons teams and close air support, as well as better intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR) coverage of remote bases before putting them out there? Wondering about domestic politics can be a slippery slope in military operations but let's not pretend it is new or will not happen. Generals from ancient Greece and Rome through our present-day commanders have always been cognizant of the effects of campaigns on domestic politics. Our SOF do not have to be as concerned with domestic politics, but the power and politics view of risk should be very much at the forefront of their minds because they are so often not in a domestic context.

With the scores of countries that SOF operate in every year, each will have a unique political context. There will never be two missions or two contexts that are identical. Every mission will have a political impact upon the country in which it is being conducted because, unless it is a search and rescue mission, it should interact with people. That interaction, no matter how small has an effect on the partner nation. This result is not an accident but is conducted by design to build relationships and influence partners.

The sheer numbers of nations and untold variables makes it impossible to be an expert on all of the countries to which an operator may travel. As such, the simplification of politics and power becomes necessary. When deploying, the country and its politics need to be studied, but universally all politics being about power greatly simplifies the utilization of politics and power as a tool. If SOF understand the political context, the question becomes do they want to shift, diminish or enhance a group's power and thereby their political strength. It certainly gets more complicated but as a baseline, if you do not understand or study politics you cannot even begin to move the pieces to be more effective. Once the possibilities of political moves are clearer, it becomes a risk calculus of politics and power…*because war is and will remain an extension of politics.*

ENDNOTES

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CHAPTER 5

LEADERSHIP, RISK AND THE FALSE PROMISE OF AUTONOMY

Colonel (Retired) Brian Petit

"Mission First, Men Always," is one axiom that every US Army combat leader remembers. And why wouldn't we? In US Army leadership schoolhouses it is mounted over doorframes, embossed on plaques, burnished in wood, and broadcast on posters. Podium-worthy speakers quote it to snap shut their lectures.

As a second lieutenant at Fort Benning, Georgia in 1992, I loved this saying. It meant a lot to me as a 23-year-old new leader of an infantry platoon. This simple and ostensibly achievable adage went beyond organizational acceptance. It had a notoriety that transcended doctrine. This mantra was gospel.

Twenty-five years later, I can reflect on this saying with a more critical eye. "Mission first, men always" is, in a word, implausible. For one, it is logically incongruent and mathematically imprecise. More poignantly, it suggests that leadership is about absolutes and not about trade-offs. However aspirational, "mission first, men always" sidesteps the cruel complications and pervasive stressors of managing risk.

This chapter addresses military leadership, risk, and the false promises of autonomy. Special operations culture has amplified, even mythologized, special operations autonomy to the detriment of risk management. As such, in this chapter, leadership and risk are framed first. Next, the orthodoxy erected around special operations autonomy is challenged. Finally, in conclusion, I offer ways to approach risk and autonomy that attempt to promote the best of special operations while containing unintended side-effects. The perspective comes from my experience leading special operations units globally in combat, conflict, and peacetime.

LEADERSHIP AND RISK

A core task of leaders, and specifically, a military combat leader, is to identify and manage risk. Risk is weighed and measured and then reduced or mitigated. By virtue of their characteristics and missions, special operations units cut these margins very tight: miscalculations or mistakes can be catastrophic to people and/or our national mission. As a former special operations commander, I often felt that the challenge of command was how to maximize initiative and seize opportunity without recklessly endangering the men or the mission.

RISK AND DOCTRINE

How does doctrine help us manage this "trade-off" proposition? US Army doctrine-in-practice divides risk cleanly. It requires us to address both risk to *people* and risk to *mission*.[1] This formula offers a more precise and accurate frame for leader choices. It implies, even directs, that leadership must consider what exposure to harm is involved to our people while we charge them with accomplishing a mission that, presumably, bears worthy rewards.

RISK AND SOF

Risk management is not unique to special operations. However, there are three characteristics of special operations forces (SOF) that consistently influence risk calculations. First, SOF often operate in small teams in isolated areas where direct support is not responsive and where tactical overmatch is always a risk. The October 2017 ambush in Niger resulting in four American SOF operators killed in action typifies this principle.[2]

Second, SOF operate in politically sensitive environments, where tactical successes or failures can have strategic consequences. The successful cross-border raid to capture or kill Osama Bin Laden in Abbottabad, Pakistan is one such example.

Third, SOF operators are, by design, older, more seasoned, and in possession of high levels of expertise. This profile presumes then that SOF are granted greater tolerance for initiative and flexibility and that decision-making can reasonably be delegated to lower levels. An example of this is SOF's ability to conduct rapid follow-on missions, sharply deviating from the original detailed and rehearsed plan.

Given these SOF characteristics, the perpetual practice of risk management has generated a subset of ideas, practices and orthodoxies that serve, or mis-serve, the special operations community. One such concept that influences our perception and practice of risk management is *autonomy*.

AUTONOMY

The special operations community has taken to characterizing its units and its missions as *autonomous.* Meant to signify a high level of independence, initiative and on-the-spot creativity, special operations autonomy is a construct of our own making.[3] To be autonomous is to be independent, free, or self-governing. Factually, military formations are exactly none of these. They should not falsely claim to be such. Special operations units are, in fact, quite the opposite: hierarchical, accountable, network-enabled, and woven into the fabric of our nation's values, ethics, and commitments abroad. Mercenaries may be autonomous. SOF are not. And, should not be.

The uniformed members of our nation's trusted special operations commands are wholly accountable to a mix of masters: orders, authorizations, ethics, law, reputation, credibility, and physics. A staggering, if incomplete, list. Hardly autonomous, as already mentioned, SOF are exactly the opposite: a reputationally visible and universally recognizable extension of our nation's power, reach, and will.

Tactically, SOF tend to be highly *distributed* and *decentralized,* military terms of art often mistaken for autonomy. The art and science of employing SOF at the far reaches of physical and political realms with empowered leaders should not be confused with autonomy. In fact, any chief executive officer (CEO) or corporate risk manager would be considered negligent and foolhardy if he or she put a finite, precious, and slow-incubating resource against the most sensitive and dangerous missions and then bestowed upon them full autonomy.

ATTRACTIVE AUTONOMY

In high-performing and innovative organizations, there is a cache to, and a cult of, autonomy. Much-admired Silicon Valley corporations inspire and perpetuate the notion of autonomy by tricks of the trade: open-day Fridays (do anything you want on company time!), side project initiatives (incubating multi-functional team

genius!) and non-traditional work schedules (work at home in pajamas!). These offerings do give valuable space to foster creativity, stimulate collaboration, and let breathe non-standard methods of productivity. They also offer some level of autonomy, but more importantly, they offer the *feeling* of autonomy. All such arrangements are crafted in a manner that will, in the aggregate, retain talent and benefit the company's bottom line.

Within special operations, much good comes from wide freedom of action and innovative thinking. There is also a dark side. Our formations, if left to their own devices in the name of autonomy, can succumb to twisted logic, normalize poor practices, resort to outright skullduggery, or simply drift toward entropy. The evidence suggests that these calamities occur when the sacred scales of "trust-but-verify" are tipped too far in the direction of autonomy.

Two historical examples illustrate this idea: World War I (WWI) British officer T.E. Lawrence and US Special Forces officer and Afghanistan veteran, Jim Gant. British officer Thomas Edward (T.E) Lawrence is, by all measures, a singularly exceptional unconventional warrior. His exploits in the Levant during World War I straddle the fine line of genius and madness. Working in a backwater theatre of the Great War, Lawrence operated with brilliant cultural acumen and was granted envious autonomy. Such sovereignty allowed him to innovate, manage risk, and snatch opportunities on behalf of the Arab tribes fighting a common enemy, the Ottoman Empire. Less advertised, but central to this story, is Lawrence's near betrayal of his country as he became quixotically enmeshed in the Arab independence movement.[4]

It is a subplot too complicated for a full telling here, but suffice to say that T.E. Lawrence's radical autonomy detached him from his chartered purpose. While Lawrence gained insight and untold wisdom about the virtues and aspirations of the Arab tribes, an objective analysis reveals that Lawrence knowingly operated at cross-purposes with the leadership of the British military command.[5]

More recently, US Army Special Forces officer Jim Gant was a multi-year veteran of the Afghanistan campaign. Then-Major Gant was a forward-thinker and a brave leader. In 2009, he penned a treatise called "One Tribe at a Time," which detailed his experiences aligning with an Afghan tribe to tip the balance in Konar Province in 2003.[6] Gant gave a cogent and compelling voice to the argument that Afghanistan's tribes and villages were central to a winning campaign.

At this point in the story, Gant is exactly what we want from a leader: a disruptive thinker and an adaptive practitioner of the military arts in a hardscrabble world. Yet, over time, Gant devolved into unethical acts, drug use, misplaced evocations of Spartan heraldry, and detachment from his lawful chain-of-command, who, in a familiar refrain, just "didn't get it."

Gant and his team were granted fantastic autonomy. That is nothing new: inspired leadership with clear results often prompts commands to lean back and simply "let them go." Sadly, instead of the measured ascendency of his sound ideas, Jim Gant became the story himself: a runaway train of awry activities cloaked as the vision quest of a warrior-king.[7]

We can place blame on Jim Gant, but a co-culprit is the culture of special operations that enthuses about the merits of autonomy and, thereby, places excessive faith in the credo of the specialized, hyper-empowered individual or small unit. Tangling with this very topic, the US Special Operations Commander (USSOCOM), General Raymond "Tony" Thomas III, issued guidance to the force in a December 2018 email entitled, "Ethics and Our SOF Culture – A Call to Action."[8] After a rash of legal and moral transgressions from the force, General Thomas stated that "USSOCOM faces a deeper challenge of a disordered view of the Team and the Individual in our SOF culture."[9]

LEARNING FROM MISTAKES

As a former commander of distributed operations, I am, admittedly, devoted to the idea that when subordinate leaders demonstrate a contextual understanding of their environment, then they are rewarded with a broader lane to operate. But it is precisely in this space where a commander's ability to assess risk becomes precarious. Add in the speed, fog, and friction of modern warfare, and standard risk management mechanisms can feel inert.

Like many commanders, I have personally miscalculated in this space, despite clear indicators that command scrutiny was warranted. Furthermore, the pressurized ecosystem of combat has a way of distorting right versus wrong; of blurring what is a calculated risk versus a reckless gamble.

Years after a combat tour, I bumped into a judge advocate (lawyer) who had served as my operational legal advisor. He reminded me of a conversation we had in the heat of battle as we considered options to support our forward teams. "Sir, that is illegal," he told me. "Yes, but it's not unethical!" I replied. A leader can fit a rationalization into the tiniest of openings.

RECOMMENDATIONS

So, if SOF are not autonomous, how do we maximize initiative and seize opportunities without recklessly endangering our people or our mission? I offer three ideas. First, special operations formations can and should operate with the *spirit* of autonomy that gives rise to creativity, dissension, trust, initiative, and daring. Paradoxically, these virtues are grown not by awarding detached autonomy and blind faith but by building sound communication habits that engender trust, close gaps in understanding, and offer venues to clarify and rectify. Such habits between leaders and subordinates can enthuse the right kind of disciplined initiative and not the wrong kind of wanton autonomy.

The best practitioners of this communications art conduct short, consistent, yet substantive touches with subordinates. The effect feels like an ongoing conversation or a collaborative endeavour that is interspersed with clear, if sharp, directives when warranted. This command style places an equal emphasis on the leader and the led. Both are consistently showing their hand, explaining their logic, and surveying the other party for ideas, options or decisions.

Second, risk should not be viewed as something that the higher command marshals and distributes like a crate of ammunition. Risk is the calculated cost, incurred by both higher and lower levels of leadership, of committing resources *to* and granting authority *for* acts that are judged worthy of benefiting the tactical moment without excessively jeopardizing the larger mission. This method places a premium on evidence-based logic, contextual judgement, and clear communication on why higher and lower should jointly commit to a greater-than-normal risk. In complicated environments, this method can become onerous to lower who must justify their actions. When done correctly, this method reduces the chances of bad practices such the "normalization of deviance."[10]

Third, bestowing full autonomy to a subordinate unit violates the sacrosanct responsibility of command. Commanders are often praised for "leaving units to do their job" and not "micromanaging." This model can be pursued to a fault, especially with personal familiarity and high trust levels between the leader and the led. A command must never forget their obligations: responsive support, emergency assistance, mission oversight, lawful guidance, and informed decision-making. If true autonomy exists, a command cannot effectively deliver these. Remote teams will relish in their full autonomy, at least up to a moment of crisis when these compacts are unmet. It is then that autonomy has a new descriptor: isolation.

CONCLUSION

Special operations culture binds us together with beliefs, values, and behaviours that are unique amongst our formations. And, like all cultures, that which binds us can also blind us. Special operations culture has, perhaps unwittingly, inflated the notion of special operations autonomy. This is to the detriment of sound military leadership and responsible risk-management. Describing or characterizing special operations as autonomous is not only misleading, it is harmful.

Refuting that SOF are autonomous is not just a practice in semantics. It is a practical distinction that the leader and the led should acknowledge, understand, and craft into actions, behaviours and expectations.

This chapter began with a reflection on the troubled absolutism of "mission first, men always." Examining and challenging this axiom helps us recognize and challenge other orthodoxies such as autonomy. When doing so, we better equip ourselves to do that which is sacred: risk-management in pursuit of mission success and safe passage for the people in our charge.

ENDNOTES

1 US Army ADP 3-0, *Unified Land Operations*, Washington DC: Government Printing Office [GPO], October 2011; US Army FM 5-0, *The Operations Process,* Washington DC: Government Printing Officer [GPO], March 2010; US Army FM 5-19, *Composite Risk Management*, Washington DC: Government Printing Office [GPO], August 2006.

2 Thomas Gibbons-Neff and Eric Schmitt, "U.S. Soldiers Were Separated From Unit in Ambush, Officials Say," *New York Times*, October 26, 2017; <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/10/26/world/africa/niger-soldiers-killed-ambush.html>, accessed 15 January 2019.

3 To be clear, there is no official USSOCOM position or doctrinal declaration that special operations are autonomous. This is more a product of the professional vernacular that surrounds SOF. The word autonomy, while not officially adopted, does appear with some frequency in articles, interviews, and writings of members of the US special operations community.

4 Scott Anderson, *Lawrence in Arabia* (New York: Anchor Books, 2013), 322-323, 362-363, 385 and 486.

5 Ibid., 362-365, 384-386, 486-487.

6 James Gant, *A Strategy for Success in Afghanistan: One Tribe at a Time* (Los Angeles: Nine Sisters Imports, Inc., 2009).

7 James Gordon Meek, Rhonda Schwartz and Brian Ross, "Top Green Beret Officer Forced to Resign Over Affair with WaPo Reporter," ABC News, June 24, 2014; <https://abcnews.go.com/Blotter/jim-gant-top-green-beret-officer-forced-resign/story?id=24266710>, accessed 15 January 2019; Jim Collins, "The Rise and Fall of Major Jim Gant," War on the Rocks, April 15, 2014, <https://warontherocks.com/2014/04/the-rise-and-fall-of-major-jim-gant/>, accessed 15 January 2019.

8 James LaPorta, "U.S. Special Operations Command Issues Ethics Guidance After 'Inexcusable and Reprehensible Violations' Including Alleged War Crimes," December 12, 2018, Newsweek, <https://www.newsweek.com/us-special-operations-ethics-war-crimes-military-1255843>, accessed 15 January 2019.

9 Ibid.; General Thomas' email to the force was released in an unclassified format and quickly appeared in multiple online sources on the reported day of its release, December 12, 2018.

10 The normalization of deviance is defined as "The gradual process through which unacceptable practice or standards become acceptable. As the deviant behavior is repeated without catastrophic results, it becomes the social norm for the organization." This particular definition comes from Dr. Diane Vaughn, *The Challenger Launch Decision* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006).

CHAPTER 6

THE RISK OF FAILING TO EVOLVE: FUTURE CHALLENGES AND THE SOF TRUTHS

Dr. James D. Kiras

One bane of armed forces historically has been complacency born of perceptions of innate superiority. Such perceptions complicate efforts to objectively assess future challenges and operating conditions and stymie innovation, particularly with cherished means or method of fighting. The net effect of complacency and failing to adapt to current and future realities is the creation of organizational and even national hubris; overwhelming pride and self-confidence that blinds one to reality. The cure for such hubris, unfortunately, only occurs after shocking failure or defeat tactically, operationally, or strategically.

History is replete with examples of the consequences of complacency and hubris, from the charges of French knights against English longbows and pikes at Crécy in 1346, to similar charges, similarly repelled with heavy losses, by Israeli Air Force (IAF) pilots against Egyptian layered air defense systems in the Yom Kippur War in 1973.[1]

Importantly, battlefield defeats are rarely decisive on their own. Adaptive militaries can learn from shocking battlefield loss and make changes, as the IAF did. The pace, intensity, and lethality of future warfare, however, may not provide militaries with the time to recover and learn from future shocks. Tactical skill, no matter how seemingly dominant at the time, is insufficient to overcome the preparations thoughtful and observant opponents and competitors develop to defeat them.

Change within successful military organizations to address future challenges is difficult. More dramatic changes can be problematic to make, even for organizations

known for their ability to adapt, such as special operations forces (SOF). SOF are known for their ability to solve problems in an unorthodox manner and experiment, learn, and adapt, relative to their larger general purpose or conventional forces. Dr. Jessica Turnley concludes such qualities are what provide SOF with their value politically and militarily. She goes on to caution, however, that this value is precarious as SOF are formalized into a larger bureaucracy, specifically an overarching headquarters such as United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM), which applies its rules and procedures in an effort to assert control and normalize behaviour.[2]

Significantly, these rules and procedures can have a detrimental effect by normalizing behaviour too much. Organizational structures, as well as doctrinal approaches to problems and missions, can easily evolve into unchallenged canon or dogma. SOF battlefield successes may even be shoehorned unquestioningly into previous doctrinal frameworks to further validate them.

One such example is US Army Special Forces (USSF) performance in Afghanistan in 2001 as evidence of the current and future soundness of the assumptions behind, and model for, unconventional warfare as specified in doctrine.[3] Another, is the current model for counterterrorism created by General Stanley McChrystal and born out of necessity to combat Al-Qaeda in Iraq, but subsequently applied to the problem of man-hunting regionally and globally, with only incremental structural and little broader organizational modification.[4]

Importantly, the specter of potential great power war after decades of relative international stability, and the stakes and risks of failure if we get the future wrong, should stimulate thinking on how SOF can contribute and remain "special" and uniquely valuable. Continued success based on past and foreseeable aggressive, if not overheated, SOF employment with a focus on non-state threats such as terrorist groups and networks will limit efforts to prepare for future conflict. In addition, guiding SOF principles and concepts including the "SOF Truths" will likely remain much quoted but little discussed or re-evaluated.

This chapter explores the risks of SOF failing to evolve by exploring first the future operating environment. This exploration builds upon the author's work on risk and futures. After defining different types of risk, it identifies three primary drivers and pressures on SOF evolution:

1. Continued perceived SOF political and military utility to address challenges below the level of general conflict, including non-state actors such as terrorists and insurgents;

2. Current and emerging technologies; and

3. Great Power competition up to and including war.

These drivers and pressures have dramatic implications for SOF. Conventional forces will embrace new technologies and domains to prevail against great power competitors at an increased rate, and will substitute increasingly capable and autonomous technologies to operate in increasingly lethal, anti-access area/denial environments on land, air, sea, space, and cyberspace.

In addition, adversaries will increasingly develop niche capabilities to offset and defeat the ability of the United States and other nations to project power. The focused investment of great power competitors will lead to a technological "arms spiral," or competition, to offset and defeat specific advantages including SOF. While this is occurring, American and Western SOF will remain committed in force against terrorist and other gray zone threats. Continued successes in these low-risk endeavours, however, may lead to a number of risks to SOF evolution. As such, one must question the future utility of the canonical "SOF Truths," and in particular, its foundational one: humans are more important than hardware.

RISK

Risk is both highly subjective but ubiquitous. Its subjectivity stems from its psychological nature, and in particular, perceptions of threat or danger and uncertainty associated with incomplete information. Given this perceptual foundation, no two individuals, much less collections of individuals socially or organizationally, are likely to view risk in precisely the same way.

In addition, risk tends to reflect calculations of threat intentions and capability against anticipated outcomes. Leaders and institutions measure threat or danger according to the information they receive and interpret. Moreover, they process it according to a range of filters including biases resulting from experience or institutional priorities.

Consider climate change. Is global warming a societal imperative to address or a national security threat? Even among allied nations, bound to one another by a collective security agreement such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) Charter, perceptions of threats and the risks they pose may vary tremendously, influencing their security policy.[5] Evidence of this variance in risk calculations includes the preparations and responses by different NATO member states to threats since 2001 such as terrorism, Russia, Iran, and China, among others.

In another example, German leaders see little risk in creating closer resource ties with Russia through natural gas pipelines such as Nord Stream 1 and 2 or economic ties with China, such as 5G investment in infrastructure by telecommunications giant Huawei, in contrast with American leaders.[6] One interesting vein of scholarship suggests the lack of a singular, existential threat, combined with the relative safety of modern society, has led to the formation of risk societies. These societies and their leaders view a wide range of policy concerns and threats, in an expansive view of what constitutes "security" including terrorism, immigration, and the environment, as risks not to be addressed or defeated but managed instead.[7]

For special operations, risk calculations vary considerably based on threats relative to the level of action of action or analysis. Special operators have an intuitive sense of risk on a personal or mission level given their mission sets and methods of operation, including high altitude parachuting, or relying on speed and surprise to offset disadvantages in security in direct action missions.[8]

In studies on special operations, however, several authors identify special operations as high-risk endeavours but fail to specify its type. In addition, authors who refer to the risks associated with special operations do so loosely, using the term in ill-defined or elastic manner, encompassing everything from risks at the objective to political considerations. Some models attempt to capture risk for SOF, but they are insufficient for a number of reasons explored by the author elsewhere.[9]

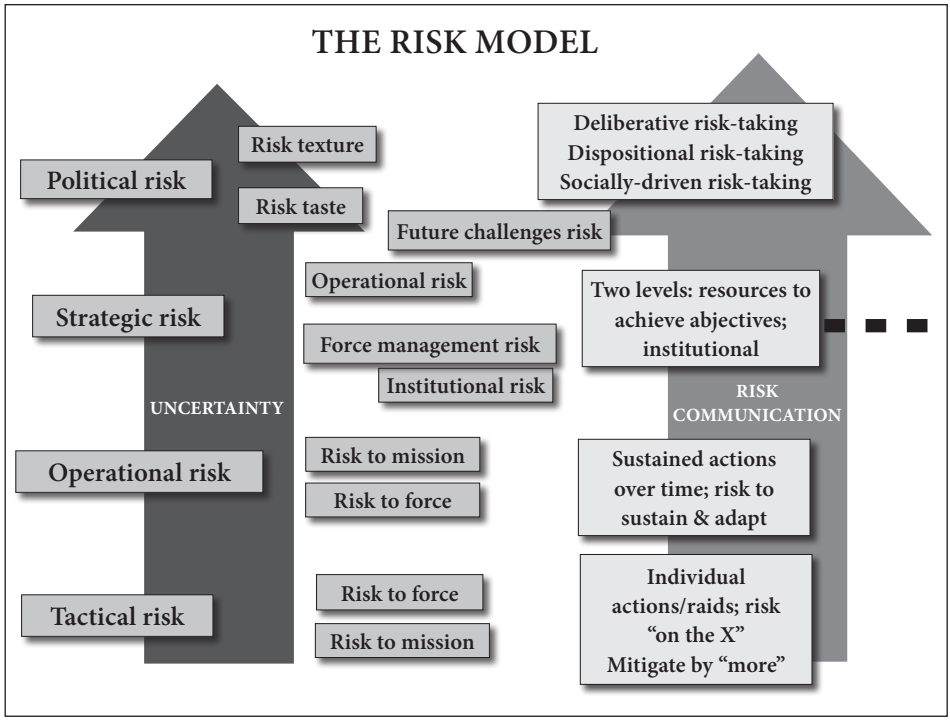

FIGURE 6.1 – THE RISK MODEL

To address the shortfalls of other models, the author developed a risk model that spans the tactical to political, or national decision-making level. At the tactical level, special operators primarily focus on risks to forces as well as risks to mission. Risk at this level is readily understood as the problems, including specific threats, which are bounded in space and time in a localized area. At the next level, the operational, more uncertainty exists as the scale and time horizon of actions grow. Risk at this level shifts to risk to mission for the sustainment of missions in the field and their connection to campaign objectives. At the next level of risk, the strategic, risk calculations start to diverge primarily as a function of organizational or bureaucratic considerations for reasons discussed subsequently. Finally, at the political level, risk calculations are a reflection of political survival and national interest, and can reflect rational cost/benefit calculations and prestige concerns, among others.[10]

There are three elements of risk from the author's model that are relevant to the specific subject of risk evolution. The first is that risk communications change due

to different frameworks of understanding risk by political and military leaders. Different frames of reference diverge the higher the level of decision-making due to considerably increased uncertainty and paucity of accurate information. The nature of risk communication changes due to a tension inherent in linking resources to accomplish specific objectives against threats and institutional considerations.

Such considerations, the second element, are a reflection of bureaucratic self-interest and include institutional longevity and health. Scholars have explored in great depth the frequent divergence of military and policy considerations, especially in works looking specifically at organizational behaviour.

The third and last element is that considerations of risk change at the political level – the level of national security decision-making – for several reasons. These reasons reflect response patterns to uncertain threats and adversary intentions. One is deliberative risk-taking, explored in prospect theory as the calculation of relative risks and gains. Another reason is dispositional risk-taking, which includes individual psychology and personality, and translates as a senior leader's threshold or "taste" for risk. A final reason is socially driven risk-taking, the result of group preferences and dynamics, or collective psychology.[11] When discussing the risks to SOF of failing to evolve, and to bound this discussion, the author focuses primarily on bureaucratic considerations at the strategic level and socially-driven risk-taking at the political level.

FUTURE TRENDS: EXTERNAL PRESSURES AND "MEGATRENDS"

Assessing risk accurately in the present and near-term is challenging enough for reasons that should be clear from the preceding discussion. Anticipating risk in the future may seem like a fool's errand, for several reasons: a poor historical record of accomplishment; added uncertainty; the potential for modest unexpected developments to have a hugely disproportionate impact as complexity theory suggests; and, inherent preferences and biases.[12] Examples include forecasts of the political stability in the Middle East and North Africa made in the 1990s. Few could foresee the impact of social media as a tool for mass mobilization and the impact it would have on regime change, in particular its rapidity and low cost, in Tunisia, Morocco, Libya, Egypt, and elsewhere during "the Arab Spring" in 2010. Organizations

including the special operations community, however, cannot afford to react to trends despite the inherent problems with forecasting; they must make informed guesses or bets about the future in order to program, budget, and resource effectively.

This chapter draws upon the author's forecast of the future for special operations.[13] The time horizon for this future is the next 15 to 20 years, and it draws upon a wide range of public and private sector assessments, including some from the special operations community, to identify where they converge and diverge. As the title of this chapter suggests, special operations forces will need to evolve. This forecast identifies the environmental pressures that will force such evolution to occur and reduces them down to three interconnected ones: continued SOF political and military utility; technology; and, great power competition. Within technology there are three "megatrends," or drivers that will force SOF to evolve.

Political leaders will likely continue to turn to special operations as a preferred method of military engagement for the near future. Such preference, however, is both a blessing and curse. The blessing comes from opportunities such as continued use creates for SOF, including access to political decision-makers, which is a reflection of the trust and confidence the latter have in the former. SOF continue to warrant such trust and confidence based on their responsiveness to decision-makers' concerns. Such concerns include providing decision-makers with feasible options when a crisis emerges, while at the same time minimizing both potential cost and risk in terms of numbers of personnel deployed against the likelihood of success. In addition, the relatively small numbers of SOF personnel committed for missions often remain beneath the threshold of public and media interest in most countries, lowering political risk to decision-makers.

Decision-makers have rewarded Western SOF for their responsiveness and perceived effectiveness in accomplishing tasks and missions in several ways. One reward has been an expansion of SOF in terms of added tasking and missions. In the past decade, American SOF taskings have expanded from nine core missions to 17 "things that SOF do," divided between direct missions with short time horizons such as raids and hostage rescues to indirect ones with longer time horizons such as foreign internal defence and unconventional warfare. To accomplish additional missions, decision-makers have increased SOF personnel. US SOF have increased from 46,000 to more than 70,000 personnel over the last twenty years. Growth in SOF personnel is a reflection of several pressures, primarily the need to sustain

the continued overseas deployments at a high operations tempo. Twenty years ago, approximately 2,000 American SOF personnel were deployed overseas, while today some 13,000 are in a single combatant commander's area of responsibility.[14]

SOF financial resources have also expanded. Officially, USSOCOM representatives claim SOF's budget share of the Department of Defense budget, relative to the armed services such as the Army, Navy, Air Force, and others, has remained constant at just under two percent.[15] While this statement is technically correct, it only reflects the programmed budget and not supplemental or additional funding above the baseline. SOF have benefitted from access to and increased shares of additional funding for "Overseas Contingency Operations," or OCO, since 11 September 2001. Such funding has amounted to almost two trillion dollars of "discretionary budget authority" over eighteen years and has comprised between five to almost 25 percent of annual Department of Defense spending.[16]

Another expansion related to SOF missions is directly connected to risk. SOF have actively sought, and political leaders have granted them, greater freedom of manoeuvre to operate. This expansion has been in terms of authorities, legal permissions, and additional funding for SOF activities. Presidential and Congressional authorities, including a number of "execute orders" and additional resources contained in various National Defense Authorization Acts, have given SOF greater latitude to conduct activities against a range of state and non-actors.[17] One example is funding for unconventional warfare, originally proposed in 2003 as a temporary means of allowing SOF to fund non-state forces. This funding has become permanent, expanded in scope considerably, and quadrupled in its budget.[18] SOF leaders have sought to drive approvals and authority down the chain-of-command, in pursuit of "mission command," and obviate more delays resulting from higher headquarters or political oversight.[19] Less oversight and approval, however, can add to political risk in the form of blowback, overextension, and potentially unhealthy civil-military tensions.[20] The net effect for SOF of continued utility and use, however, may be an inability to evolve fast enough to meet the challenges posed by technology and great power competition.

The author's previous work on futures suggests three potential "megatrends" associated with another environmental pressure: technology and its trends. Brigadier Richard Simpkin's prediction about the future relationship between technology, conventional forces, and SOF, made in 1985, provoked the author's thinking about

the future trends.[21] One "megatrend" is that technology looks increasingly to replace human skills. The commercial sector is developing technology in pursuit of greater efficiency. Efficiency will result in reducing one of the greatest costs in industry: labour. Human capital is expensive to develop and sustain, in terms of training, maintenance, and upkeep, much less retain in a competitive market. Within the Department of Defense, "personnel make up the single largest category of costs" and account for almost one-quarter of its annual budget.[22] Labour costs can be reduced by automating certain functions in the pursuit of what the commercial sector labels as "lean manufacturing." Reducing costs makes companies more competitive and allows them to capture a greater market share.

Humans are also inefficient users or operators given their ability and their propensity to error and mistakes. According to US Department of Transportation survey, driver errors – in recognition, decision, or performance – account for 94 percent of all motor vehicle accidents.[23] SOF invest heavily in training and exercises under the most realistic conditions possible. Repetitive training and exercises hone and maintain skills, in order to reduce the likelihood of combat errors, at increased costs, as well as increased risk of training accidents.[24] SOF repetitive training reduces but does not eliminate error, which can have significant consequences depending the nature of the mission, as the death of British hostage Linda Norgrove, caused by her rescuers, suggests.[25] To further reduce errors on the battlefield, technology will impact all levels of engagement, from strategic down to tactical skills. For example, in order to allow operators to react quicker and operate more efficiently in close combat, the next generation of infantry assault weapons will be equipped with ballistic compensators and computerized sights to increase accuracy and decrease ammunition expenditure.[26]

SOF operators will bristle at the idea that technology will replace skill, and in particular, their finely honed one. They will counter such assertions that war is a human endeavour, working by, with, and through people in the human domain. In evolutionary terms, SOF see themselves as apex predators militarily, which results from passing through unique and often grueling selection and assessment processes.[27] The changing character of war associated with great power competition, however, may decrease contact in the human domain or, more likely, render the costs of inserting and sustaining teams of SOF operators prohibitive. A potentially useful analogue for SOF to consider related to this point is piloted flight.

Environmental considerations, and in particular pursuit of flying higher and faster to gain a relative advantage, rapidly eclipsed the utility of human pilots – as early as 1926. In order to keep pilots in the cockpit, engineers automated an increasing number of functions and flight physicians developed equipment as aircraft flew higher and faster. The net effect of these changes is that pilots do not "fly" aircraft in the traditional sense of operator sensing and input. They instead manage complex, interdependent automated systems that allow the aircraft to function.[28] The Secretary of the Navy controversially suggested in 2015 that the service is acquiring its last manned fighter. His remarks have spurred considerable debate within the most pilot-centric armed service in the Department of Defense, the US Air Force, about similar ideas to decrease risk and cost, including optionally manned future fighters and bombers.[29]

Another "megatrend" is that the traditional relationship between SOF operators and its support functions, or "combat enablers," will invert. SOF operators currently are at the apex of pyramid consisting of numerous internal and external support function. Some of the inversion of this pyramid will result from the nature of operating environments. Put simply, the relative return of sending "handfuls of heroes on desperate missions" into high-risk environments may not be worth the relative return in terms of target observation, destruction, or intelligence collection in increasingly denied and hostile environments.[30] The emphasis will shift instead to the various combat support enablers that now provide the operators with the information, support, and sustainment necessary to execute missions effectively. The output of such support enablers, combined with the last "megatrend" discussed below, will be more valuable in relative terms operationally and strategically at significantly reduced risk. Such output can be thought of as network information and analysis, enemy system sensing and understanding, and support to conventional forces in high-tempo, high intensity combat actions. The SOF methodology of "Find, Fix, Finish, Exploit, Analyze (F3EA) is now common military knowledge jointly and among coalition partners.[31] In the future conflict, however, the results of Finding, Fixing, Exploiting, and Analyzing will become the focus of SOF operations, and the Finishing portion deemphasized or conducted by technology or others who present less risk. Continued growth of SOF may paradoxically lead to an organizational shift in its most important product: SOF operations may have future value for the products its support functions create, as opposed to the battlefield actions they take.

A final "megatrend" presents another possibility: rather than replacing the operator with technology, the former may need to integrate with the latter to maintain a competitive edge. This competitive edge may be necessary to maintain "continuing advantage" against great powers.[32] Technological integration can occur in a number of ways, including between machines. Rather than controlling a specific system, such as a single unmanned aerial vehicle or precision-guided munition, the operator would instead loosely command a system – popularly referred to as a "swarm" – of machines to act in a self-synchronizing manner.[33]

Operators can also integrate *with* technology. The roots of integrating with this technology lie in increasing operator performance. Such performance enhancement, engineered at the genetic level, can increase stamina, cardiovascular oxygen transfer, resistance to cold or heat, or improve cognitive functions. An additional integration is between human and machine through cybernetic enhancement. Such enhancements already exist but serve a prosthetic function: the replacement of lost organs or limbs including eyes, arms, and legs. USSOCOM, working with Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA), has spent almost a decade trying to develop a working exoskeleton, initially with the CARNIVORE program and finally through the recently terminated Tactical Assault Light Operator Suit (TALOS) program. The goal of initial forays into SOF exoskeletons was to increase operator range and protection. According to an official history, SOF interest in an exoskeleton resulted from the acknowledgement "that while other items (weapons, vehicles, etc.) have changed dramatically from WWII [World War II] days, the basic Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) has not."[34] The primary challenges in developing exoskeleton have been power sources, or limitations of battery weight and life, and ergonomic ones, or making such systems fit within the limitations of human physiology. Rather than molding the machine to fit the person, technology will be increasingly available to integrate SOF operators directly with technology.

Returning to future environmental pressure on SOF, the third and final reflects the dual nature of great power competition. Stated simply, this nature will result in an arms spiral, or more accurately, a capability spiral. In this capability spiral, the United States conventional forces will seek to maintain their offensive military advantages and ability to project power while its great power competitors will seek both to deny the same, and field offensively superior systems of their own. The nature of this competition, and this most dangerous of security dilemma scenarios, will likely have significant implications for SOF.[35]

Near-peer or future peer competitors have observed with great interest the means and methods of US force employment over the past two decades and sought to counter them. Such competitors have identified weak links in the chain of American power projection, including physical ones such as limited numbers of "super bases" and power projection platforms, to virtual ones in the form of dependence on specific information technologies and methods of data transmission. These weaknesses are the subject of much public discussion in national security fora and provide the inspiration for works of popular fiction such as *Ghost Fleet*.[36] China and Russia have invested in capabilities such as mobile anti-ship ballistic missiles (the DF-21 and DF-26), long-range high-speed surface-to-air missiles (S-300 and S-400 systems), fifth generation fighter aircraft (the J-20 and Su-57), and hypersonic weapons (the Russian Kalibr and Zircon missiles), among others. The Department of Defense collectively labelled such capabilities as "anti-access/area denial" (A2AD) systems. The rationale driving the acquisition of such capabilities is transparent: "A critical reason for the success of Russia's and China's grey-zone strategies is that they have invested heavily in long-range sensor and precision-strike networks as well as cyber and space capabilities that can impose unacceptable costs on America projecting power in their regions."[37]

Great power competitors are also investing in niche capabilities to gain an offensive military advantage. China and Russia are aggressively pursuing exoskeletons for infantry, including the latter's Ratnik-3, leading to what one analyst has labeled as "a military exoskeleton race."[38] Beyond augmenting the individual soldier, both countries are also pursuing and have fielded a range of autonomous air, ground, and sea platforms. Such platforms can autonomously sense, identify and discriminate, and in some cases, engage hostile targets. Autonomous and remotely controlled systems will be linked to forms of artificial intelligence, as well as quantum sensing, computing, and communications capability, in what Chinese scholars refer to as "strategic frontier" technologies.

Such disruptive technologies could provide a military offset advantage for China. Researchers Elsa Kania and Stephen Armitage conclude, "quantum radar could not only undermine the US advantage in stealth but also inherently increase the potential costs of war, forcing the United States to accept higher operational risk and nullifying billions of dollars spent on stealth coating for platforms operating in the Western Pacific." They add quantum sensing has the potential to "change the dynamic and use of the spectrum in ways that could be highly disruptive in future

warfare."[39] Russian development and Chinese prioritizing of leading innovation in artificial intelligence as a state policy, combined with its strategy for development by 2030, suggests to scholar Sophie-Charlotte Fischer that "[i]n the development of new technologies, the balance of power is shifting eastward."[40]

Should this balance of technological power continue to shift in this direction, Western militaries will lose the primary advantages they have had in command and control, a key to military success that they have utilized for the past fifty years.[41] Chinese goals look to change the nature of the military competition and "shift from information superiority to intelligence superiority, and from the information domain to the cognitive domain" as does the Russian use of social media to conduct what some analysts have termed "political warfare."[42]

To maintain their competitive advantage, Western conventional forces have and will continue to develop and test technological offsets of their own. These offsets are occurring at all levels of potential conflict, from the individual soldier to global information architecture. The purpose is to extend the contact distance friendly Western forces have with the enemy, and limit the risk exposure of personnel. One recent assessment of British Army experiments plainly states the underlying rationale behind the pursuit of "remote warfare":

> Specifically, [unmanned ground vehicles] and [remote weapons systems] which were trialed extensively in 2018 by the British Army. Based upon research conducted on these recent trials, combined with current up-to-date in-theatre applications of such technology, it is assessed that the use of such equipment will expedite the rise of remote warfare as the preferred method of war by western policy makers in future low to medium level intensity conflicts seeking to minimise the physical risks to military personnel in addition to engaging in conflict more financially viable.[43]

Western militaries, following the American lead, are pursuing unmanned and remote battlefield systems in all operating environments of war, including land, air, sea, and perhaps even space and cyberspace. This pursuit highlights another element of risk calculations. Decision-makers want to minimize the political risk of friendly military casualties, particularly in conflicts where the stakes do not warrant a heavy investment in blood and treasure. To avoid such costs, decision-makers are

willing to substitute technology, with its attendant cost, for military personnel by limiting their risk exposure.

There are two primary implications for SOF military technological competition between the conventional forces of great powers. The first is the trend towards an increasingly empty battlespace in terms of military personnel, with a concomitant rise in sensing and engagement distances with precision fires and remote systems for both long and close combat.[44] The second is drastically increased pressure on SOF to "evolve or die." The gap in capability between conventional forces and SOF is closing at an exponential rate. The former has increasingly adopted tactics, techniques, procedures, and equipment fielded rapidly by the latter, including adopting night vision goggles as only one example. SOF will need to compete in the realm of remote warfare and maintain their precarious value in the future.

Great power competitors have also taken note of the success of Western SOF and studied it with great interest. As a result, they have developed doctrine and studies to conduct their own forms of special operations warfare, as evidenced by the Chinese "Lectures on the Science of Special Operations" manual or the Russian articles that outline the so-called "Gerisamov Doctrine."[45] In addition to theoretical writings, great power competitors have conducted and are planning offensive SOF-led operations of their own, such as the 2014 Crimea and Ukraine campaigns spearheaded by the so-called "little green men." Through study, Russia and China are looking to defeat Western SOF in future encounters. For example, a portion of the largest military exercises conducted by Russia in almost 50 years, Zapad 2017, featured "counter-sabotage exercises," and likely formed part of the more recent joint Russia-Chinese exercise, Vostok-18[46] "Counter-sabotage" is a euphemism for "Western SOF and their proxies."

Finally, China continues to inoculate itself socially against traditional SOF tasks and missions, including unconventional warfare, by sequestering potential indigenous allies and reeducating them, as well as experimenting with a social credit system designed to limit the resources and mobility of segments of the population vulnerable to agitation and mobilization.[47] While some SOF operators may be inclined to dismiss future war with great powers, and suggest the norm will continue to be activities beneath the threshold of conflict in the "gray zone." SOF may not have the luxury of deciding how they would prefer to evolve, as conflict between great powers may be inevitable for structural reasons of international politics.[48]

Future risk, in terms of tasks and missions, exist even if the great powers avoid "Thucydides's trap" and fall into full-scale war.[49] Even if they only continue to operate primarily against non-state actors and other "gray zone" threats, SOF risk becoming victims of their own success. The market demand for SOF may be strong but political and social risk tolerance and calculations can and will change. As former military policeman and writer Roger Beaumont suggested more than a half-century ago, and Colonel (retired) George Monroe more recently, elite forces, including SOF, have been subject historically to "peaks and troughs" of use. Necessity drives this cycle, initially leading to expansion as such forces demonstrate their utility, followed by overuse until the need has passed or such forces are consumed.[50] SOF have maintained their precarious value since 2001 largely as result of political and social expectations of their conduct and success. One driver for reduction or dismantling historically has been the souring on SOF when decision-makers' or the broader population's expectations are no longer met or increasingly challenged. Journalist Sean Naylor suggested recently that the political "risk taste" for SOF may already be changing, thanks to Congressional perceptions of insufficient oversight over SOF activities, as well as recent narcotics and murder scandals within the force.[51]

Increasingly capable commercially available technology, proliferating globally, may change risk calculations related to SOF as well. SOF operational freedom of manoeuvre may be further constrained by information available through the ever-increasing "internet of things." The proliferation and cheap cost of connected devices, and their linkage together, creates a network of adaptive and responsive social media/human sensors. In addition, not all of these sensors need to be manned. Put simply, it is much more difficult for SOF to maintain operational security and stay hidden for long, much less control their narrative of battlefield successes.

To put this in another social context, think of witting or unwitting plane/train spotters, linked with cell or smart phones, watching and waiting for SOF activity.[52] The seemingly insatiable public and adversary appetite for information on or about SOF creates undesired attention and scrutiny. A window into this future reality is the image and video content taken and uploaded by the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara against a 3rd Special Forces Group team near the village of Tongo Tongo, Niger in October 2017. The ambush video and its documentation in this remote village not only went viral globally, but led to Department of Defense inquiry, Congressional testimony, and a revision of American SOF presence and order to assume "less risk" on the continent of Africa.[53]

In addition to the external risks to tasks and missions as a function of the future environment, SOF face risks that are internally generated. The risks within SOF reflect the considerations at the strategic level in the risk model. Such risks are a function largely of bureaucratic concerns and reflect the existing tension between adequate resources to accomplish objectives and the institutional or long-term health of the organization. Within SOF, or internally, the author suggests there are two primary sources of risk.

The first internal risk is the one born of complacency of threat, or a contempt for the enemy, leading to sense of indefatigability and innate superiority. There is no contesting the fact that over the past 17 years, Western SOF have been wildly successful. Complacency within SOF can stem from cognitive biases, including framing, heuristic-based, and most especially, overconfidence-based ones.[54] Put simply, a number of assumptions within SOF about future operations may be reflect the pattern of previous success, if they remain unchallenged. Such assumptions can include the viability of legacy missions in future conflicts, including unconventional warfare, conducted in the manner depicted popularly in books, as well as films such as "12 Strong," in a future comprised of remote warfare. Potentially more damaging is that SOF leaders may carry over assumptions about threat capabilities, sustainment, and available support, both SOF and conventional, into a medium or high-end war.

The method of mitigating SOF risk to force and mission most recently has been overmatching threats with SOF and conventional support, including endless requests for more intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR), more mobility and lift assets, and more fires and armed over-watch. Both SOF and conventional forces have operated with relative impunity from enemy threats from uncontested bases and spaces. SOF have enjoyed freedom of manoeuvre and employment, for a considerable time and at considerable distances, without adversaries contesting their movement to or from bases, although the fielding of weaponized hobby drones by terrorist groups and others suggests this era may be coming to a close.[55]

The likelihood conventional assets in support of SOF will be available in the same manner, during a great power conflict, is slim indeed. There is a cautionary tale for SOF from the Vietnam War: the rescue of Oyster 1, Captain Roger Locher, in 1972. That search, rescue, and recovery mission into contested airspace required 7th Air Force to stand down all of its other operations and conduct more than 800

strikes in support. In the future, the diversion of so many assets to assist or recover SOF missions in high-threat environments may be unlikely, or not be worth the risk to support forces.[56]

The second internal risk of complacency relates to the future investment strategy for SOF. The tension in this category is between taking on and expanding missions while continuing to invest in older missions. At stake is that just as the cost of "no fail" missions is higher in great power struggle, so too is the investment required in their capabilities discussed in the section on "megatrends." SOF may find it challenging culturally to divest of or radically alter investment strategies, in favour of other mission sets, because they are central to the identity of different organizations. Put simply, SOF may have to choose what tasks and missions matter most, and invest accordingly, as well as drastically reduce the list of 17 "things SOF do" in the process.

"No fail" direct action missions, in other words, may maintain priority over indirect missions whose outcomes are more in doubt. A recent Department of Defense Inspector General report identified significant gaps in reporting and assessments of the success of some indirect missions, specifically counterterrorism and stability operations capacity building programs administered and conducted by SOF, in terms of achieving long-term goals and program objectives.[57] In addition, well-publicized success of SOF in its indirect missions as part of Operation Enduring Freedom, Philippines, is coming increasingly under critical scrutiny and reassessment.[58] In order to manage its future budget and force health, and reduce labor costs, SOF may need to perform tasks and missions with a higher perceived return on investment, and visible success, or reduce tasks and missions to lower cost and risk.

Risks within SOF are a reflection of culture, both organizational and national. The reality of current and future warfare for Western SOF, however, is its collective or coalition nature. No Western leader prefers to act unilaterally when it comes to the sustained use of force, rhetoric the contrary notwithstanding. Such preference definitely extends to the employment of SOF. Much of the preceding discussion focused on American SOF, given its leading role in the global SOF network, as well as the availability of published source material. There are also risks to tasks and missions that are a reflection of elements between the SOF of different countries. As the country with the largest special operations capability, as well as the upholder of the current economic and legal system, the direction the United States takes

with its SOF has implications for its coalition partners. The logical risk that flows from the preceding discussions is that if US SOF goes down the road of greater technological investment and integration according to the three "megatrends," it may risk perhaps pricing its partners out of the market. It is worth recalling that US SOF are larger than the entire armed forces of many of its partners. American SOF count personnel in the tens of the thousands, while some partner nations struggle to maintain several hundred operators. In the best of all possible future scenarios, SOF partners will be able to make investments in niche capabilities, such as ISR, operators, or support capabilities. In the worst scenario, American SOF investments necessary to survive and sustain operations in a high threat environment, based on the "megatrends" discussed previously, may force partner nations into the dilemma some faced on whether or not to purchase the "Joint Strike Fighter," or F-35.[59] Partner nations may not be able to purchase the latest generation capability given their high financial costs. Yet, by not investing in such capabilities, they may not be able to afford the political and strategic costs of coalition partners marginalizing their contribution given the risk of employing their outdated equipment.

SOF TRUTHS AT RISK?

The author has surveyed a range of trends, drivers, and risks related to future tasks and missions. Surveys are useful to stimulate thought exercises but putting some of its ideas to the test scrutinizes its validity. The author cannot evaluate all of the risks identified above due to limits of time and space. Given that culture is at the heart of identity, and is one of the most difficult to assess objectively, the author draws a number of themes and risks together here to explore the future validity of a set of ideas at the core of SOF identity: the SOF Truths.

There is no underestimating the importance of the five "SOF Truths" to American SOF identity. The Truths have served their purpose admirably since they were first codified; they have been both sword and shield for the SOF community. First, American SOF senior leaders used the Truths as protection and insulation from the political and military abuses dogging their history since their creation during the Second World War. Such protection was most important during the early days of USSOCOM when outsiders and skeptics questioned the value and utility of SOF relative to the resources it received. Second, the SOF Truths serve as a reminder for SOF senior leaders not to sacrifice key qualities and attributes of broader

community in pursuit of resource acquisition or expansion as demand increases. Third, the SOF Truths provided the individual operational components – Army Special Forces, Navy SEALs, and Air Force Air Commandos – with a set of ideals and higher principles necessary to forge and sustain a collective identity, or SOF culture. The SOF Truths act as an admirably concise and pithy reference for SOF operators to differentiate themselves from conventional military forces. The five Truths are:

- Humans are more important than hardware.
- Quality is better than quantity.
- SOF cannot be mass-produced.
- Competent SOF cannot be created after emergencies occur.
- Most special operations require non-SOF assistance.

The utility of the Truths, however, is also accompanied by their inherent danger. Their very pithiness and seeming self-evidence can lead to them to having an unassailable, almost mythic universal explanatory quality – a "truth" in the theological sense of the term, such as the catechism is in some religious faiths. For example, a former SOF operator who employs the Truths in his consulting business suggests, "they can literally drive almost every aspect of your operational unit, or your civilian corporation, or your personal life." He adds, "they're almost beautiful in their simplicity" and "I live my life according to the SOF truths, or I try to at least."[60]

The Truths are ubiquitous in SOF: on SOF websites, in posters in SOF headquarters, and cited with regularity in articles, professional military education theses, as well as books on SOF. As with the codified nine principles of war military officers learn early in their career, the intrinsic danger of both lies in their becoming a universal explanation and substitute for thought, or checklist, rather than a heuristic and an initial departure point for inquiry or action.[61] In addition, the author has participated in discussions where operators and senior leaders have used the SOF Truths as a bludgeon and ultimate word for why a course of action or program should *not* be pursued.

The totemic value of the Truths does not mean they are immune to manipulation and stretching, as their brief historical record suggests. One SOF Truth was omitted conveniently from the list early on. The acknowledged author of the Truths, retired

Colonel and Congressional Research Service (CRS) researcher John Collins, became aware that USSOCOM had adopted them in 1993. The Truths had originally appeared in a 1987 CRS report that conducted a comparative analysis of American and Russian SOF units.[62] Collins noted, however, that USSOCOM only used four of the five original Truths. In his words, the last Truth was "dropped simply because … it said special ops needs some help." He added, "Its omission encourages unrealistic expectations by poorly tutored employers and perpetuates a counterproductive 'us versus everybody else' attitude."[63] In other words, SOF leaders modified or even dropped the Truths when it suited their purpose in pursuit of broader institutional goals. USSOCOM Commander Admiral Eric Olson restored the fifth Truth in 2008 to acknowledge that conventional forces "have substantially increased our capabilities and effectiveness throughout the world."[64]

Some argue there have been sins of commission related to the Truths, in addition to those of omission. Few discussions within SOF at a certain level are as rancorous over the past two decades than those surrounding the third Truth: SOF cannot be mass-produced. This chapter noted previously the considerable expansion of American SOF since 11 September 2001 – an increase of 65 percent. Those who defend the expansion claim "needs must"; the operational requirements to deploy and sustain forces in a global campaign, while maintaining force health and readiness by rotating forces in and out, drove expansion. SOF leaders managed the expansion responsibly, through "deliberate growth" incrementally and ensuring proper implementation at the task organization level.[65] In addition, the third Truth remains inviolate, as the majority of personnel added to the SOF community are support staff, including combat enablers and liaison personnel.

Critics of expansion acknowledge the requirement but point to poor management, and cite as evidence changes in SOF selection and accession, as well as apparent stress fractures in the overall health of SOF. Changes include the shift to direct accession into selection programs and some SOF units, such as occurred in the Special Forces 18X program and with the dispatch of Air Force pilots from Undergraduate Pilot Training (UPT) into operational SOF squadrons.[66] More evidence that is recent exists in modifications to Army Special Forces Assessment Selection to broaden the recruiting pool, and in particular, removing trust and team-building requirements such as peer review, as well as the log carry. Filling manning spaces, and managing new operators at the task organization or unit level, they argue, comes

at the cost of a loss in valuable experience, maturity, judgement, and patience that have characterized SOF operators, in the haste to produce new recruits.[67] They will also point to the trend of higher assessment and selection completion rates over the past two decades. Shortcuts in selection and assessment, combined with frequent deployments and stress, have not only led to higher than normal suicide rates but also incidents leading to "growing congressional concern with misconduct, ethics, and professionalism" of SOF.[68]

Given that some SOF Truths have been selectively ignored or stretched, and in light of the future challenges discussed above, it is time to reevaluate the cardinal truth: that humans are more important than hardware. Previous sections argued that technology is increasingly substituting for labor or personnel in the public and private sector, to reduce cost and risk. In addition, great power competitors are seeking to drastically increase the cost of penetrating into, and operating within, space they control and in response, conventional forces are looking to fight at greater distances remotely and even autonomously. To maintain their unique but precarious value, SOF should remain at the spearhead of force experimentation and fielding by embracing technology in a number of ways, by hardware replacing humans for the riskiest SOF tasks and missions or operators becoming the hardware, by integrating with it, for reasons outlined previously. By doing so, SOF will reduce risk to mission and force by putting fewer operators in harm's way in high threat envelopes, diminishing the need for sustainment and exfiltration should missions be compromised, or increasing the chances of survival and success by augmented or enhanced operators, further maintaining their appeal in decision-maker's political risk calculations. The primary risk to overcome in replacing humans with hardware results from the tension at the strategic level, or institutionally. Bureaucratic self-interest within the SOF community to preserve personnel and resources, as well as their political and military appeal, will work against doing so, as will reconsidering and changing long-held, operator-centric cultural norms.

Critical thinking requires challenging assumptions and beliefs, developing a framework for analysis, looking at evidence, and reaching logical conclusions in an objective manner. If core concepts or beliefs such as the SOF Truths are sacrosanct, the SOF community may find itself well-prepared to fight the last wars and surprised by the conditions of the current one. The question for the SOF community to answer in the coming years is not whether hardware should replace humans

entirely; the choice is neither binary nor a mutually exclusive one. Instead, the question can and should be: "to what degree, and under what conditions, should humans not perform the task if hardware can do it better?"

"Human agency persists" as former Air Force pilot Timothy Schultz concludes in his study about the relationship between pilots and automated systems, but its nature may change and evolve in SOF for social, political, and technological reasons. SOF may remain in control, but perhaps in different ways, in favour of systems designers, architects, engineers, and other traditional supporting roles, and at the expense of operators.[69]

In some respects, hardware has already replaced humans for certain SOF tasks, for some direct action missions, in the form of armed drones.[70] Operator-led raids in so-called "kill/capture missions" continue, but remote systems perform many of the tasks more efficiently and with less risk across the spectrum: tactical, operational, strategic, and political. SOF direct action missions may change, and be limited to *in extremis* responses to rescue hostages or seize personnel, equipment, and information. Rather than persisting in the belief that operators are "masters of chaos" able to "oppose any foe" in future operating environments, SOF may do well to consider what tasks and missions should be modified or done away with all together.[71] Being "the perfect soldier," ready to repeat the successes of the past two decades, can lead to complacency if unprepared to confront the realities of a battlespace increasingly occupied and dominated by remote systems and machines.[72] The French knights at Crécy and IAF pilots during the Yom Kipper War possessed considerable daring, bravery, and skill; these qualities were insufficient to overcome changing battlefield conditions. The IAF responded in the decade after the Yom Kippur War and utilized remote systems to reduce cost and risk in addressing the threat of integrated air defenses, which they used to great effect in the Beqaa Valley in 1982.[73] To remain at "the tip of the spear," SOF may need to reconsider its tasks and missions, including the relationship of technology and the role of the operator, or pay the twin prices of complacency and being too risky to use.

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58 One of the best sources on the successes of OEF-P is contained in Linda Robinson, Patrick Johnson, and Oak Gillian, *U.S. Special Operations Forces in the Philippines, 2001-2014* (Washington, DC: RAND, 2016). Mark Munson, "*Has Operation Enduring Freedom-Philippines Been a Success?" Small Wars Journal,* 10 April 2019, <https://smallwarsjournal.com/jrnl/art/has-operation-enduring-freedom-philippines-been-a-success>, accessed 28 February 2019 is representative of more critical assessments of the mission and concludes it was mixed at best, based on continuing levels of violence.

59 Stephanie von Hlatky and Jeffrey Rice, "Striking a Deal on the F-35: Multinational Politics and US Defence Acquisition," *Defence Studies* Vol. 18, No. 1 (2018): 19-38; Peter Jones and Philippe Lagasse., "*Crash or Burn: The Conservatives' F-35 Dilemma,*" *3* April 2012, <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/opinion/crash-or-burn-the-conservatives-f-35-dilemma/article4097491/>, accessed 26 February 2019.

60 James Clark, *These 5 Special Operations Truths Should Drive How You Approach The Private Sector,* 8 April 2016, <https://taskandpurpose.com/5-special-operations-truths-drive-approach-private-sector>, accessed 11 February 2019.

61 For a stinging critique of such approaches, especially overly prescriptive ones and their danger, see John Shy, "Jomini," in Peter Paret, ed., *Makers of Modern Strategy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1986),143-185.

62 John Collins, *Green Berets, SEALs, & Spetsnaz: U.S. and Soviet Special Operations* (New York, NY: Pergamon-Brassey's, 1987), xiii.

63 Sean Naylor, "Adm Olsen Adds 'Lost' 5th SOF Truth to Doctrine," <https://navyseals.com/nsw/adm-olsen-adds-lost-5th-sof-truth-doctrine/>, accessed 11 February 2019.

64 Ibid.

65 House Armed Services Committee, *Current Manning, Equipping, and Readiness Challenges Facing Special Operations Forces.* HASC No. 110-12, Hearing Before the Terrorism, Unconventional Threats, and Capabilities Subcommitee, House Armed Services Committee (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2017), 3.

66 On the Army 18X program, see US Army Future Soldier Center, "Special Forces Recruit (18X)," 9 July 2014, <https://www.facebook.com/notes/us-army-future-soldier-center/special-forces-recruit-18x/10152565461462497/>, accessed 26 February 2019. Research and analysis on the question of restoring selection and assessment to the Air Force Special Operations Command is contained in Patrick Wnetrzak, "Finding Apollo's Warriors: The Future of the Air Commando Heritage." Masters' Thesis, Maxwell AFB, AL: School of Advanced Air and Space Studies, June 2013. On direct accession of pilots from UPT in operational squadrons, see Kelly Hobgood, "Training Blueprint for an Air Commando," Master's thesis, School of Advanced Air and Space Studies, Air University, Maxwell AFB, AL: School of Advanced Air and Space Studies, June 206, 44-45.

67 Reproduction of an anonymous email, and the nature of its content, must be taken with a grain of salt, but the following encapsulates many operators concerns, albeit in a polemic. *Newsrep*, "Careerism, cronyism, and malfeasance in the Special Warfare Center," 27 November 2017, <https://thenewsrep.com/94786/careerism-cronyism-malfeasance-special-warfare-center-end-special-forces-capability/>, accessed 26 February 2019.

68 Andrew Feickert, *U.S. Special Operations Forces (SOF): Background and Issues for Congress* Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, April 2018), 7.

69 Timothy Schultz, *The Problem with Pilots* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins Press, 2018), 173.

70 The heated discussion over how to refer to drones illustrates the point. Those within air forces refer to them as "remotely piloted vehicles," stressing pilot skill, positive control, and human agency. They bristle at the monikers used without, such as "drone" or "unmanned aerial vehicle," for suggesting a lack of direct control in either.

71 Linda Robinson, *Masters of Chaos. The Secret History of Special Forces* (New York: Public Affairs, 2004); and Mike Moyar, *Oppose Any Foe: The Rise of America's Special Operations Forces* (New York: Basic Books, 2017).

72 James Dunnigan, *The Perfect Soldier: Special Operators, Commandos, and the Future of US Warfare* (New York: Citadel, 2003).

73 Lon Nordeen, *Air Warfare in the Missile Age,* 2nd ed. (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2002), 159; Anthony Cordesman and Abraham Wagner, *The Lessons of Modern War. Volume 1* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1990), 192-193.

CHAPTER 7

THE TENSION OF TRUST: A COMMANDER'S PERSPECTIVE ON ASSESSING RISK

Colonel Steve Hunter

As a member of the Canadian Special Operations Forces Command (CANSOFCOM), I have had the privilege of commanding a Special Operations Task Force (SOTF) on five separate occasions under very different and diverse circumstances. Specifically, in 2009, I commanded a SOTF in Kandahar, Southern Afghanistan; in 2010, a domestic SOTF for the Vancouver Winter Olympics (i.e. Task Force Whistler); and, on three separate occasions between 2014 to 2017, I commanded a SOTF in Northern Iraq as part of Operation Impact. Although each mission was different, many of the same challenges and themes were consistent throughout. Specifically, all of these missions required rapid assessments of risk, and decision-making in ambiguous circumstances.

Ideally, the perfect situation for a deployed Special Operations Forces (SOF) commander would be to select and conduct only those missions for which our uniquely skilled and highly trained forces were optimized, while at the same time, having all of the authorities (e.g. freedom of manoeuvre, targeting/kinetic strike) necessary to execute these operations in a timely fashion. However, any experienced commander will tell you that this is seldom, if ever, the case.

In reality, SOF forces are quite often asked to execute missions which may be considered below or outside of their perceived domain and expertise. Furthermore, in today's complex and politically-charged operating environment, authorities are often held at the highest levels to minimize political risk, and manage and control

decision-making. These factors place additional constraints on the various levels of the chain-of-command. As a result, commanders at all levels, from the sergeant detachment commander, to the Chief of the Defence Staff (CDS) must consistently assess risk at their level, while having a strong understanding of their responsibilities and authorities, in order to make decisions in this challenging space. The challenge is compounded by compressed timelines, and uncertainty with the level of information a commander possesses.

What results in this ambiguous space is a requirement to accept risk. Risk is arguably a very personal and subjective concept. Assessing risk is based on personal and professional experience, education and training. In the human domain of military command, this is challenging because no two people share the same background.

Initially, it is important to address the issue of risk itself. It is a concept that is constantly at the forefront of all military operations today, yet, an idea that is not always fully appreciated. As the saying goes, "hindsight is 20/20," and most decisions will be criticized to varying degrees. As I reflected on this notion and my personal SOF command experiences, it kept bringing me back to one single important aspect that was key to assessing risk tolerances in my decision-making. That facet was trust.

Trust is the currency that Canadian SOF (CANSOF) deals in on a daily basis. We do not have the luxury of a foundation built on hundreds of years of history, or multiple layers of headquarters to protect our equities (i.e. filter/absorb direct responsibility for actions in theatre) at the tactical level. We are a flat organization that places incredible amounts of trust in our members at all levels. This approach allows us to respond quickly and not second-guess subordinates. The expectation is that subordinates will always perform to the highest levels within given authorities, which in turn builds and preserves our trust internally, and more importantly, with key decision-makers. To be more specific, in our high risk, complex, and ambiguous operating environment, we are always judged and to a degree, in the eyes of most, we are only as good as our last mission. Therefore, CANSOF must always respect the fragility of trust as it can be very fickle.

Here lies the rub. Risk is subjective. Consider for a moment "success" on operations. Decisions made by commanders are always critically dissected by subordinates, peers and superiors and personal and collective assessments are made. In my experience, when discussing commanders you always hear statements such

as, "that guy is risk adverse," or conversely, "the commander is reckless!" Rarely is there a middle ground or a consensus.

I would posit that a commander's risk is a willingness to take responsibility for certain actions that rest within the respective commander's authorities, while carefully weighing the probability and possibility of negative consequences of these actions. There is no science to this process. Quite simply, it is based on personal and professional experience and a "feel" for the environment. And, it is all supported and backed-up on the currency of trust. That is trust up the chain-of-command and trust down through the ranks.

The challenge in tactical decision-making arises when the natural tension of trust is present between the expectations of subordinates and the respective authorities, specifically the constraints and restraints imposed by superiors and political decision-makers. Our operators are selected, trained and equipped to operate at the highest operational level and their expectation is that they will be employed accordingly. They must trust that the chain-of-command will employ them this way. By contrast, the strategic environment will dictate the limits, and the authorities that decision-makers will delegate to the commander on the ground. These limitations and authorities should never be considered as calling into question the capabilities and skill of the individual operators or the organization, but rather they are developed through the lens of strategic risk, often interpreted as "justifiable risk" in the eyes of the Canadian public. In the end, any deviation by the SOF leadership on the ground from the allocated authorities runs the risk of quickly eroding institutional, governmental and public trust and confidence in CANSOF. This outcome can result in a loss of freedom of manoeuvre and more imposed restraint in future operations. It's a delicate balance that must be deliberately considered by Commanders at all levels on a regular basis.

Allow me to offer an example. Between 2005 and 2009, the CANSOF mission in Afghanistan had many peaks and valleys. Some periods of high operational tempo (i.e. multiple missions) followed closely by other periods where the tempo was noticeable less. My first experience of Task Force Command took place in 2009, when after only ten months in the rank of major, I was promoted to lieutenant-colonel (while so employed) and appointed commander of our Special Operations Task Force in Southern Afghanistan. At the time I was a squadron commander and I had a close relationship to the soldiers in my command. Fortuitously, (from a

perspective of action-oriented SOF operators) when we arrived, it was a period of high tempo (i.e. an active enemy which demanded aggressive action). My predecessor had been targeting an improvised explosive device (IED) network that was active in the vicinity of Kandahar and initially our expectation was that we would take over the target pack that had been developed and continue to do the same.

However, upon further detailed analysis, we identified that the Afghan National Election set for August 2009, was to be a key strategic event (and centre-of-gravity) during our rotation. As a result, I made the decision that we would focus our efforts on high tempo operations in the vicinity of Kandahar City, arguably the heart of the Taliban Insurgency, and critical to Government of Afghanistan success. Further, we would assume risk by lowering the threshold of intelligence required to mount specific tactical actions to maintain pressure and an aggressive posture on various sectors of the city.

Although this may seem intuitive and was clearly supported by the chain-of-command, there was debate within the Task Force about why we were focusing on Kandahar City and lowering our threshold at the expense of "much better targets" out in the rural areas. Obviously, the easy (and more popular) decision would have been to stay the previous course (i.e. rural operations based on robust intelligence target packs) and continue to focus on this network. However, that would have significantly affected our ability to contribute to the eventual success of the election, which took place with minimal interference. Clearly our actions contributed to this overall success.

Yet, another example was my command experience in Iraq between 2014 and 2016. This deployment was a completely different experience from Afghanistan. Although my previous tour had political nuance in dealing with the host nation, Coalition and Government of Canada direction and inter-agency relationships, it was nothing compared to Iraq. This latter theatre was politically charged in all aspects. Understanding the different motivations, attitudes, drivers and influences, as well as the myriad of agendas and undercurrents with regard to all the players was astounding despite the fact that much of the SOTF effort was initially focused on non-combat military assistance, as well as assistance to Iraqi and Kurdish elements involved in combat.

Arguably, in Canada, there remained a widespread negative public perception with regard to the 2003 American invasion of Iraq and the drawn out brutal follow-on insurgency that resulted. However, I vividly remember my first visit to the front lines in November 2014. The Daesh (commonly known as ISIS – Islamic State in Syria) flags could be seen clearly from Zardak Mountain. I remember thinking that a company of Canadian light armoured vehicles (LAVs) supported by a troop of Canadian artillery, could have cleared from that point to Mosul in a matter of days. Not surprisingly, our troops thought the same thing.

But that was not our mission. Our task was to train, advise and assist host nation forces to deal with the threat. Throughout my three tours, there were regular frustrations at all levels with the constraints and restraints that were placed on the Task Force throughout the mission. There was always a desire to act in a unilateral fashion without the impediment of the local partner forces, because it was easier and likely would have been more effective. But, that was not the direction or the governmental policy. To risk ignoring the political limitations put on the mission was not measured in possible casualties, but rather in the impact on CANSOF credibility and trust by the CDS, national political decision-makers and the Canadian public.

Mitigating the tension of trust is extremely important for leadership. For CANSOFCOM credibility and trust is our vital ground. If we lose this, or if the CDS, Minister of National Defence, the Government of Canada or the Canadian people no longer believe we can be trusted to conduct operations in accordance with direction, or in a responsible and professional manner, then the Command will lose its freedom of manoeuvre and the ability to respond quickly and with the appropriate authorities to be relevant in the future.

Yet, the tension of trust continues to exist. SOF operators are by nature, action-orientated, goal focused, and wired to get things done. They are also risk-accepting and confident that they know what "right looks like." This mentality is why they were selected. But again, the greater risk is not weighted in the consequences of kinetic action but rather in the failure to understand the larger dynamic of civil-military relationships and the primacy of civilian control.

In my experience, I have found that there are a number of strategies for dealing with this tension of trust. The first is consistent, clear, constant communication.

Communication seemingly has become more and more difficult despite the plethora of means, and increased access. However, it is most important as we continue to operate in the rapidly evolving information age. Events move exponentially faster now with the reality of smart phones and the multitude of social media platforms. In essence, every person with a smart phone has become a sensor, media reporter, if not window on the world. Instantaneous media feeds, viral videos, and detailed information is passed globally as events happen.

Ironically, even with all of this information available, it is precise information which can be lost in the sea of noise. SOF Operators require precise and targeted information on more regular intervals to remain clear on intent and understand the "why." Commanders must regularly engage subordinates to ensure that what is important and what is simply "noise" is clearly understood in the avalanche of information that is generated on a minute-by-minute basis. This constant messaging ensures a common understanding, which equips subordinates with a greater ability to make timely and accurate decisions while minimizing risk.

This constant engagement is the reality. Clearly in the SOF operating environment, risk acceptance up and down is reinforced through clear, accurate and timely communication. This approach reinforces trust. It is up to the commander to be clear in articulating the mission. Furthermore, it is important to provide background, regular feedback and context, as well as to explain what is driving certain decisions to better enable subordinates to understand the nuances and context of the politically charged, and often sensitive, environment. In addition, it is important to constantly reinforce the necessary messages to ensure that all are aware of the mission and all its complexity.

At the same time, our subordinates must accept the responsibility of ensuring that they have a full understanding of the parameters of the mission and the accompanying authorities (i.e. authorized actions that can be taken, as well as limitations, restrictions, constraints) that exist. I believe that trust can only be maintained if there is strong communication within an organization regardless of the challenges faced. However, much like strong relationships, strong communication requires constant attention and effort.

Concomitant with communication as a strategy to build trust is innovation. Trust can be reinforced when a commander listens to subordinates and allows them to

innovate. In my experience, there were a multitude of innovative solutions to problems developed in both Afghanistan and Iraq and I can proudly say that I was not responsible for generating any of them. My job was to take the best innovative ideas and solutions, articulate those higher and set the conditions for their implementation. This relationship between subordinates and commanders reinforces trust and a sense of value to the team and a shared sense of purpose towards the mission.

In the end, risk is arguably subjective and heavily dependent on the situation and circumstances. As such, build situational awareness. Take the time to understand what is at play, what is the actual problem, what is the political context and what are potential solutions. Often, commander's sense risk if they delay or rush to a decision. This stifles innovation and can derail great initiatives. Conversely, it is important to realize that no decision becomes a decision in itself. As such, it is important to also weigh in the risk of not doing anything or taking too long in acting.

If it seems that there is no easy solution, unfortunately that is the reality in the ambiguous, volatile, complex security environment that exists today. Trust in your training, education and experience, as well as that of your superiors, peers and subordinates. Speak truth to power and understand and understand the environment. Analyze the material at hand, weigh the options and consequences of your decisions. Then trust in yourself to make the necessary choices and act within the tolerances of risk. The future of successful SOF operations demands it.

CHAPTER 8

"IS THE JUICE WORTH THE SQUEEZE?": SENIOR NON-COMMISSIONED OFFICER PERSPECTIVES ON RISK MANAGEMENT

Colonel Howard Coombs and Colonel (Retired) Bernd Horn

No-one would challenge the assertion that the senior non-commissioned officer (NCO) corps is fundamental to an effective, successful army. As the renowned Canadian military historian Desmond Morton commented in an observation that is timeless with regard to its applicability:

> Non-commissioned officers, promoted from the ranks, enforced discipline, managed routine administration, and socialized recruits – and sometimes their commissioned superiors – in military ways. By common consent, they formed the backbone of their unit.[1]

In the simplest of terms, senior NCOs are instrumental in ensuring that the day-to-day affairs of the military are executed – whether for training, discipline or the conduct of operations. They concentrate on force preparation, specifically training individuals and small teams to ensure that they are motivated, well-trained (i.e. meet the standards of performance for a given trade, skill or function) and ready to carry out their mission. They are also involved in the professional development of young soldiers and junior NCOs, as well as young officers. On operations, they ensure those attributes and skills learned in training are put into practice. In short, senior NCOs ensure the job gets done.

Although senior NCOs have always been the backbone of any army, their importance has grown in the modern battlespace. Operations in the chaotic, complex security environment of today necessitate more than ever the presence of a strong, professional senior NCO corps. The new operating environment is marked by complexity, ambiguity, and an ever-present media, as well as nefarious enemies and asymmetric threats. Predictably then, military operations in this environment are enmeshed with risk. Even at the lowest tactical level, actions carried out on the ground are laden with physical, political and strategic risk. As such, senior NCOs are faced with navigating the minefield of risk in everything they do.

Not surprisingly then, risk is a concept with which senior NCOs are very familiar. They not only think continually about risk, but they must also constantly make decisions that weigh the costs and consequences of making decisions and taking action, as well as not taking action. To examine the perspectives of senior NCOs and risk, five very experienced Special Operations Forces (SOF) senior NCOs participated on a panel dealing with the concept of risk. They were:

- Canadian Chief Warrant Officer Andy Bonvie;
- Canadian Chief Warrant Officer Rick Biddiscombe;
- US Command Sergeant Major Patrick McCawley;
- US Master Chief Petty Officer Richard Puglisi; and
- US Sergeant Major Jerome Misher.

THE MEANING OF RISK

In his comments to the conference Mr. Mark E. Mitchell, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations/Low-Intensity Conflict, suggested that ideas of risk have many permutations depending on the level from which one is examining these concepts.[2] Risk at the strategic level is difficult to envision due to the many variables, often hard to foresee, that impact upon the decisions taken at that strata. This makes the discernment of strategic risk more an art than a science. Mr. Mitchell opined that risk management seems to be more straightforward in the operational and tactical arenas where the threat environment, even though complex, is more easily discernable, consequently allowing one to better recognize the peril associated with these hazards. In the course of his address Mr. Mitchell highlighted a number of ideas pertaining to strategic risk management that spanned the

conceptual levels of conflict, and were also reflected within the panel discussion. From this discourse it was postulated that risk is:

1. Sometimes risk is hard to detect;

2. Adversaries sometimes have different conceptualizations of risk and lower risk thresholds;

3. Decision-making processes need to be speedy and agile; and

4. Risk management processes do not eliminate risk but minimize it – elements of risk always exist and can create failure. Due to all of these factors, risk management is a continuous discourse that aims at reducing operational uncertainty within complex threat environments and optimize mission success by all involved.

Consequently, it is important to delineate what the word, or concept, of risk actually means to those who are charged with implementing tactical activities. Sergeant Major Jerome Misher explained, "risk equals the probability of consequences and the severity of those consequences" based on the decisions and actions that are taken. This very direct approach underscores the assessment, often with little time or information, that must be made by senior NCOs in clutch situations. As such a wrong assessment can have long-term and lasting effects.

That reality was not lost on Command Sergeant Major Patrick McCawley. "Risk," he declared, "defines everything we do." For McCawley, the idea of the "strategic corporal," a concept that at its root conveys the idea that the actions of any soldier in an operational setting, regardless of rank or position, can have a strategic impact due to the ever-present media, and more invasively, social media. In today's security environment almost everyone has a cell phone and, thus, becomes a "sensor" with the ability to broadcast images instantaneously around the globe. McCawley believes that this reality is "very relevant now" and as a result, means that soldiers "assume risk that has strategic level consequences." Therefore, "everyone needs to have a sound understanding of risk."

The elusive element to risk, however, is that everyone has their own lens when it comes to assessing risk. According to McCawley, defining risk is about "perspective." As he explains to many free fall parachuting, or skydiving, is seen as a

high-risk activity. However, for an SOF operator, it is not. He equates it as the same level of risk as riding on a helicopter. The reason he believes this is true is because of training. Training prepares individuals to undertake free fall parachuting to the point it is seen as routine activity. "Training," McCawley insists, "should be like bloodless combat and combat should be like bloody training." For McCawley, "where you sit is where you stand with risk." From this, one can see why there are varying perceptions of what constituted risk between Special Operations Forces and other types of forces and organizations. The latter tolerance for risk is higher and a product of hard training.

For Chief Warrant Officer Rick Biddiscombe "risk is about trust and confidence." He believes if you trust yourself, your team and your superiors, in that everyone will make the right decisions, take the right actions and do what they were trained to do, risk is minimized. The same holds true for confidence. Be confident in your training, education and experience, as well as your team and equipment and once again, risk becomes diminished.

At the same time Chief Warrant Officer Andy Bonvie suggested that risk relates to potential jeopardy to the mission and those entrusted with its completion. He strongly advocated that an understanding of the risk associated with a specific activity must be communicated to the lowest levels and it can be mitigated through a number of fundamental ideas. This includes a focus on simplicity in the planning and conduct of missions and other activities, a comprehensive understanding of basic skills, an emphasis on operational security and, lastly, practice – repetition – ensuring more successful outcomes.[3]

THE LEVELS OF RISK

All agreed that their approach to risk assessment is not necessarily different whether in training or operations. That is to say, they assess each activity/action/behaviour against the prevailing circumstances and assess, based on reasonably expected outcomes, the likely consequences in terms of injury, whether physical, or to unit/institutional or national reputation, or the ability of actions/behaviour to act as a trigger or catalyst for protest or outrage. Clearly, in a training or benign setting the risk assessment has more latitude for error, while in a crisis, conflict, or combat situation the risk assessment is more time constrained and potential consequences are more severe should an error be made.

Despite best intentions, however, Master Chief Petty Officer Richard Puglisi concedes that "diplomatic/political risk is often overlooked – we just don't often factor that in." This is not surprising since at the tactical level immediate threats trump potential negative outcomes of actions. Furthermore, the risks are far more proximate and the consequences more discernible.[4] Master Chief Petty Officer Puglisi also highlighted the importance of trust as the foundation in understanding and dealing high risk environments. Creation of shared trust and perspective was integral to understanding various degrees of risk and mitigating those hazards. He also observed that for Special Operations Teams movement between joint special operations areas are the times when teams are at their least adept in understanding risk in the new theatre, or when new members join the team and must be integrated to ensure a building of their understanding of the risk environment.

Interestingly, Chief Warrant Officer Andy Bonvie pointed out that it is important to have both risk averse and risk accepting individuals on your team. "Risk averse individuals," he maintains, "make you check and confirm your decisions." He explained, "you change their perspective through trust and credibility (of the leadership, team and plan)." He noted, however, that individuals will often change their perspective and flip (i.e. accepting to averse and vice versa) at the six to nine-month point in an operational tour. Bonvie contends that bottom up planning develops confidence in the training and operations that have a direct impact on the level of risk teams are willing to take.

Following from this idea, Chief Warrant Officer Rick Biddiscombe suggested that one must be a pessimist in risk assessment; one plans for the worst and hopes for the best. As part of this approach he also pointed out that in this context trust and confidence are vital in creating risk mitigation. In encouraging that establishment of trust and confidence, one must also safeguard the welfare of the families of those who are involved in operations.

Command Sergeant Major McCawley advocated that it is important to create an understanding of risk at all levels. Those involved in operations need to examine the risk involved in order to produce an understanding of what is an acceptable level of risk. McCawley opined that those organizations which practice risk assessments as part of all activities become more adept as assessing operational risk.

The role of constant and intensive training in creating an understanding of risk was also underlined by Sergeant Major Jerome Misher. However, Misher also emphasized that while training was important, the conceptualization of risk cannot be properly understood until one has experienced combat operations. Drawing on his own experiences, Sergeant Major Misher stated that his ability to understand and assess risk became more finely honed after his first combat deployment to Afghanistan and the truism "the enemy gets a vote" became firmly imbued within his comprehension and analysis of risk.

BALANCING RISK/MISSION ACCOMPLISHMENT

The issue of level of risk individuals or teams are willing to take becomes an important one. What if risk aversion becomes prevalent? How do you achieve mission accomplishment? Or the alternative? Chief Petty Officer Puglisi remarked:

> After 17 years in combat, that influences how we assess risk. Are we addicted to war? Most would rather be in theatre of operation in Iraq with their team rather than here. Has training and combat changed how our brains work/how we think? What does that do to risk management?

All very valid questions. The answer, according to Chief Warrant Officer Biddiscombe is "about perceiving the Commander's intent." Once you understand what the objective is, Biddiscombe believes, you can take "a measured approach to risk; make a sound plan and conduct sound training to prepare everyone. Biddiscombe asserts that in the end, it's about answering the question "is the effect worth the risk." Importantly, he stresses, "you cannot let risk drive the plan."

His colleagues agree. Consensus on the panel centered around analyzing the mission/objective against the outcome. As one panelist so eloquently professes, it's about determining whether the "juice was worth the squeeze." Simply put, would taking heightened risk to personnel, equipment, organizational/national reputation (if the mission failed) be worth the outcome results if the mission was successful? If the answer is yes, there is no issue. However, if the answer is no – why take the risk? Command Sergeant Major McCawley emphasized, "acceptable risk is determined by weighing all the mitigating factors; what you deem to be tolerable after considering all of the factors." Sergeant Major Misher acknowledged:

> Everything I do, I assess risk to mission - risk to force. Can we put it off for another day? Does it have to be done? I always consider the risk I took to accomplish the mission and the risks I didn't take to save my men.

United Nation (UN) peacekeeping/peace support missions provided an excellent example. McCawley bluntly maintained that with regard to accepting heightened risk, on UN missions, its "the men first, the mission second." Bonvie concurred. He explained that UN peacekeeping missions did not always have a very clear, credible articulated outcome/purpose or clearly definable or robust rules of engagement, therefore, it had to be personnel first. All felt the calculus on UN missions with regard to risk assessment was far more discerning in terms of acceptable risk.

DEALING WITH RISK

Mission accomplishment, however, is key to everything SOF does. Chief Warrant Officer Bonvie noted, "it is not in us to encourage failure; it is in us to push the envelope." In training this is expected and encouraged. "During training," Bonvie explained, "an action done by someone that is not tactically sound, we let it go because you can learn from the failure." In fact, Bonvie believes that people learn more from failure because the SOF operator hates to fail. Failure in turn, will cause the individual "to sit back and evaluate, assess and make recommendations." In a flat organization such as SOF, issues that rise from the "bottom up go up the institutional ladder very quickly."

All agreed. Biddiscombe added, "introduce failure into training so they learn and make training difficult." McCawley professed that it was instrumental to let people fail in training:

> Allow people to make mistakes. Measure depending on severity of mistake whether to correct. In combat, people make mistakes. Some get away with it, others don't. You can't crush people for mistakes on the battlefield or people won't make decisions in the future.

He highlighted the changed conflict environment with the added complexities of the information age will create unanticipated challenges and a broadening of operations to incorporate those outside of the special operations community. This inclusiveness will create circumstances in which failure could result.

The introduction of failure in training is key to dealing with risk. By pushing the envelope in training, individuals can test their training, equipment, their team, their decision-making and their personal abilities and skills. Understanding these components allows leaders to better gauge risk and what is in the realm of the possible.

An important mechanism for dealing with risk and extracting the most out of training and operations from the panel perspective was the After Action Review (AAR) process. Misher declared, "AARs are great – a 'hot-wash' allows you to make corrective action possible and to refine your TTPs [tactics, techniques and procedures]." He concluded, "it's the only way to know if your plan or TTPs work or not." He also observed at another point in the panel discussion that there are many unforeseen dimensions, like the political dimension of one's own and host nation, that must be taken into account with conceptualizing risk that can create untoward consequences.

Chief Warrant Officer Bonvie described his approach to dealing with, or mitigating, risk. He explained:

1. Always ensure you provide personnel with a clear aim and purpose. As a leader you need to clearly articulate the objective and ensure it's distributed to the lowest levels. This is hugely important to make teams more mobile and adaptable;

2. Simplicity of mission and task. When in the realm of chaos descends, everyone must know what to do;

3. Speed of action. Ensure rehearsals and master the basics – be proficient with the basics;

4. Security of message and action. Only those who have a need, need to know;

5. Repetition; and

6. Surprise.

The entire panel agreed that it was absolutely essential to have mitigating strategies for risk. Risk was not something that could simply be ignored. In fact, Bonvie

clarified, "there are indicators of leaders who fail to mitigate risk." He insists you can tell. He revealed there are tell-tale signs of those who are unable to mitigate, or deal with risk. Specifically, he indicated that "communications will be lacking, as well as a deficit of trust and credibility." He added, "ask people what is the role? Task? And if no-one knows – the answer is deafening."

McCawley agreed. He elaborated, "if junior membership is unaware of what is going on, it's an indicator of a failure to deal with risk." He added, "it [lack of awareness] breeds complacency; you see complacency in no planning."

Misher advocated the need for supervision and training, as well as communication in reducing risk and Puglisi summed the discussion up with an observation that the commander's guidance for the operation was the basis of comprehending the mission and risks associated with it. Without scrutiny and awareness of that guidance the risks associated with it "cannot be understood" or addressed.

THE ROLE OF LEADERS

A discussion of the question "When do you know when you take too much risk?" evolved into a discourse of leadership and its relationship to risk. Sergeant Major Misher started the dialogue by admitting, in retrospect, he has at times taken too much risk but in the course of that discussion also suggested that being risk adverse was not a positive command quality. From that, the dilemma for a leader is achieving that middle ground in understanding risk.

Command Sergeant Major McCawley said that leaders educate operators to understand risk in a fashion that accurately reflects the threat levels. They also encourage situational awareness at all levels of the chain-of-command in order to mitigate challenges in communicating the risk that tactical teams encounter when dealing with missions and tasks. McCawley also observed that sometimes complacency can emerge in attitudes towards risk, particularly in combat veterans. He believes that leaders must overcome this attitude and ensure that those involved in Special Operations activities understand the calculus of risk in a proportionate fashion. Furthermore, McCawley mentioned that leaders must also develop more junior members of the organization who may not be as comfortable with adjusting an understanding of risk based on evolving circumstances, but choose to

continue with their understanding of risk based on what was associated with the original planning.

Chief Warrant Officer Andy Bonvie stressed that leaders must communicate to those involved in Special Operations Forces that they are "putting life on the line." As such, understanding risk is a real thing and must be taken seriously. Plus, communicating these same ideas of risk to other people and organizations in a multi-agency environment, who sometimes are not as cognizant of these hazards, is a leader responsibility. It is not sufficient after the fact to say "I told you so…" and a leader must do everything possible to create a shared awareness and understanding of risk.

Similarly, Master Chief Petty Officer Puglisi explained the leaders must become comfortable with how they assess and calculate risk. They must question "Are we doing the right thing?" with regards to actions taken in operational risk mitigation. Puglisi also stressed the need for the Special Operations leader to understand the operational environment and be able to communicate it to others.

In a like fashion, Chief Warrant Officer Rick Biddiscombe, emphasized the value of experienced, educated and trained NCOs and officers in dealing with risk. Building on previous discussion he noted that as a NCO one must always ensure that leaders stay engaged with their teams. He observed that if leaders isolate themselves they tend to "stop listening" and become less aware of the threats that are impacting on their mission. NCOs play a critical role in maintaining team and unit coherency, facilitating many things, including an understanding of risk.

THE MOST IMPORTANT ISSUE WITH REGARD TO RISK

Finally, the panel provided a number of "nuggets" of wisdom with regard to risk. These kernels of knowledge included:

- Puglisi – "Maintain standards; rehearse, rehearse, rehearse; train to need; ensure foundation skills are solid; maintain high standards. This recipe will allow you to change on a dime and be agile on operations. Going into high risk situations starts with a solid foundation of skill.

- McCawley – "Risk aversion does have a negative connotation. Educate team members on risk – why we need to weigh it all out. Messaging – make folks understand in terms they understand."
- Biddiscombe – Pair experienced senior NCOs with younger officers.
- Puglisi – "ensure augmentees who are added to your team from the outside and didn't have the opportunity to do work-up training with the team are brought in and closely mentored as quickly as possible. They don't necessarily have our culture or skills, therefore, you need to get hands around them to bring them up to speed."
- Misher – "Cyber has produced a great deal of risk and we do not yet understand of the dimensions of this threat."
- Bonvie – "We must encourage a learning environment and allow failure. The after action process makes Special Operations Forces strong."
- McCawley – Leadership is about looking at "future service equity." In the context of a constantly evolving security environment will the Force "evolve" or maintain the "status quo."

These "nuggets" all contribute to what Lieutenant-General (Retired) Michael Day, a former Commander of CANSOFCOM, described as maintaining operational relevancy.[5] The operational setting is changing too fast for strategic authorities and planners to recognize, leaving tactical Special Operations Forces ill-prepared to reach a desired end state. Lieutenant-General Michael Nagata, Director of Strategic Operational Planning at the National Counterterrorism Center, expressed similar thoughts when he opined, "the world is changing so fast that we are not recognizing the risk."[6] Accordingly, it is up to those who conduct tactical activities to be agile and adaptable in understanding and conducting their missions. The ideas advocated by the panelists exemplify the philosophy necessary for future operations.

CONCLUSION

It was evident from this panel discussion that rather than a well-defined and rigid process of analysis and evaluation, risk management conducted by special operations NCOs was a more fluid and dynamic process with implications spanning the levels of conflict.[7] In addition to the specific suggestions provided by the panelists, a number of common themes that resonated with the ideas put forward by

Mr. Mitchell emerged in the panel discussion. Firstly, the environment of conflict has changed. Risks pertain to the information vice industrial age and as such are difficult to detect, discern and neutralize. Secondly, communicating an understanding of risk in a multi-agency environment is challenging. Moreover, creating that shared awareness and understanding is difficult, let alone mitigating risk amongst partner organizations during Special Operations Forces activities. Thirdly, risk can be reduced through education and training. Fourthly, mentoring of superiors and subordinates by NCOs is vital to creating leader and operator understandings of risk. Lastly, the assessment of risk in Special Operations missions requires a high degree of institutional knowledge. Special Operations Forces must be cognizant of the implications of risk from the tactical to strategic and, indeed, political levels.

In many ways this discussion reflected a conceptualization and operationalization of dealing with risk that meets the demands of the constantly evolving threat environment – and deals with the points raised by Lieutenant-Generals Day and Nagata. In this setting the ideas advocated by Chief Warrant Officers Bonvie and Biddiscombe; Command Sergeant Major McCawley; Master Chief Petty Officer Puglisi; and Sergeant Major Misher, while not a panacea, provide much material for reflection and also suggest elements of a framework for risk management during operations and training now and in the future.

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1 Desmond Morton, *When Your Number's Up* (Toronto: Random House of Canada, 1993), 95.

2 Mr. Mark E. Mitchell, is also a United States Army Special Operations veteran with wide-ranging experience in the Middle East and South Asia.

3 An interesting historical discussion of all the points raised by Chief Warrant Officer Bonvie is contained in Stephen Ambrose, *Pegasus Bridge 6 June 1944* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1984). This account of the successful seizure of a vital bridge over the River Orne on D-Day by elements of 6 (UK) Airborne Division illustrates what takes place, despite all that can go wrong, when, during mission preparations, one adheres to all of the points raised by Bonvie.

4 Relatedly, Command Sergeant Major McCawley explained, "decisions on the battlefield can destroy careers. Technology can allow commanders at a distance make decisions for people on the ground. This has created a problem where people on the ground are afraid to make decisions independently. You need to allow persons on the ground to make the decisions."

5 Lieutenant-General (Retired) D. Michael Day was Canada's first Special Operations General Officer.

6 Additionally, Lieutenant-General Michael K. Nagata, United States Army, is a former Commander Special Operations Command Central.

7 See Canada, National Defence, *B-GJ-005-502/FP-000 Joint Doctrine Manual: Risk Management for Operations (Amendment 1)* (November 2007); internet, <https://www.bdfbarbados.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/Risk-Management-CF-Guide.pdf>, accessed 01 March 2019 and United States, Department of Defense, *Joint Publication 3-0 Joint Operations (17 January 2017 - Change 1)* (22 October 2018); internet, <https://fas.org/irp/doddir/dod/jp3_0.pdf>, accessed 01 March 2019 for formalized concepts of risk assessment and management.

CHAPTER 9

POWER, RESPONSIBILITY, STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION, AND CULTURE: IMPROVING RISK CALCULUS IN DEFENCE ENVIRONMENTS

Dr. Paul S. Lieber and Thomas Sear

Wayne Gretzky is perhaps the most over quoted hockey aphorist in business history.[1] His father's words of wisdom to "skate to where the puck is going, not where it has been" is often used as shorthand for the capacity of imagination and success, also the ability to foresee and act accordingly. Less quoted is Gretzky's sister comment, "it doesn't matter what I think. It doesn't matter what other people think. You have to get on the ice and participate and play and the best team wins."[2] The biggest take-away from this secondary notion is that only within the game itself, where decisions are made, do things actually matter.

Failure to evolve comes down to a few main factors.[3] The first being the "competence trap,"[4] which when combined with a lack of competition and a cognitive lack of awareness, leads to the lack of Gretzky puck situational awareness. Individuals assume victory stems from preparedness and strategy, when, in actuality, it is a product of either poor competition, isolated circumstance and/or accompanying variables organized in a very unique way. Second, and when stuck in a collective personality of fear, one may altogether avoid conflict, fearing the scenario of failure itself.

Extending Gretzky's philosophy (of surfacing interactions between ontology and epistemology), arguably the only way to comfortably assess risk in military scenarios is to:

a. make decisions in real situations; and

b. limit such decisions to instances only when one possesses proverbial skin in the game.[5]

This approach, however, becomes problematic in grey zone scenarios short of conflict, where preparation for the possibility of risk most often occurs.[6] Despite this modern reality, there remains limited research on linkages between actual and assessed risk in defence contexts.

RISK AND POWER

Culturally bounded assumptions and conventions about risk will ultimately determine how individuals both make sense of risk and also how they will consider certain methods more appropriate than others. As referenced earlier, having skin in the game, or the potential of direct impact from a risk, is key. Moreover, each society sports unique lenses on how individuals within should respond to risk.[7] Simulations appropriating risk must account for these permutations.

In American or Australian society, for instance, socially accepted response to communal risk is to arguably band together for pro-societal gain in lieu of personal sacrifice. It is no coincidence that both the British Empire diaspora award "for valour," the Victoria Cross (1856), and that of the US Medal of Honor (1862), commenced at almost precisely the same time. Both are special tributes to recognize courage as individualist sacrifice in an increasingly democratic and egalitarian, but mass participation, era of warfare.[8]

In fact, there are literally hundreds of mainstream Western movies dedicated to telling stories of individuals whom, when confronted with highest levels of risk, are left with a clear cut decision to surrender personal safety to protect a greater community or societal good. One may even argue that the prominence of the modern superhero genre is tied to this risk calculus: the price of being granted great talents is a willingness to assume a more lopsided risk nexus in favour of self-sacrifice.

Humanization of these individuals, a central storytelling tenet, only further magnifies this theme.

Similarly, risk perception is likewise directly impacted by one's view of where power fits within the risk calculus. This is divided, research-wise, into a continuum between state oriented (paternalistic) to individual (self-reliance for preparedness and survival) responsibilities when confronted with a risk scenario.[9] Along this continuum, one can either begin from an ideal where power is bequeathed to government to assure a person's survival, or, on the other end of the continuum, assume this same government exists solely to help action an individual's self-responsibility for his/her safety. This disparity is arguably more glaring than ever in the age of social media, making post hoc questioning of risk/time/decision-making almost inevitable. Finger pointing and pundit analyses tend to feature only extreme ends of the paternalistic/individual continuum, notably on second guessing a government's in/action at times of crisis.

The culprit? The execution of strategic communication, or the deliberate shaping of risk by official entities before, during and after crises. Communication, especially online and in attributed form, is a semi-permanent record of these phenomenon, allowing individuals to review the unfolding of risk in both micro (limited to that scenario) and macro (overlayed against sister and/or longer term scenarios) contexts. Unfortunately, and while online platforms empower analyses, they do not guarantee accuracy of captured information. In addition, it must be simultaneously noted as but one conduit in potentially many communication platforms a source can and will use. (This is discussed in more detail below.)

RISK AND RESPONSIBILITY

Risk perception is ultimately driven by a person's belief of his/her role when at risk. This perception also shapes what strategies are subsequently at his/her disposal. To explain, someone who believes they should master risk as a challenge will assume completely different options versus an individual who sees risk as surviving an anomalous wave drenching an otherwise placid and powerless shoreline.

The second component is the sister variable of how much trust one has in authorities during a risk scenario. Even the best strategic communication campaign will

fail if trust isn't present. This is especially salient in areas impacted by war. In these environs, populations are fatigued from:

a. excess stress;

b. abundant communication from all players in the conflict seeking influence; and

c. constant determinations on who to trust on;
    1. when;
    2. on what; and
    3. to what extent.

It is for this reason nefarious actors can and often target risk impacted populations for overt or subterfuge gain.

Third, and finally, is who to blame when things go wrong. Is it a product of poor governance that seemingly abandoned a population? Or, societal norms that almost naturally surface during crisis situations? In civil war scenarios, does the blame for a family member death reside on self or society? Or both, and to what extent/s?

These are obviously very complicated questions. Still, too many military risk simulations look to historical examples as predictive components of future ones, and with it assume that risk-reasoning, power and blame remain constants. While it is important to not over-complicate these factors when formulating a simulation, they must be accounted for, at a minimum, within a standard deviation of acceptability to be representative.

RISK AND STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION

Perhaps the biggest gap in current risk assessment is ignoring communication without words themselves. While military information operations doctrine dictates that the optimum solution for passing a message is by saturating an environment (via leaflets, broadcast, cell phone communications, etc.) as needed for potential effect, research dictates that less is more. Notably, it is important to communicate in methods target populations are accustomed to versus over-focusing on frequency and reach of the communication.

At times of crisis, researcher Erin Frost uncovered discrepancies in what she termed "hegemonic" versus "guerrilla" methods of communication.[10] International and national entities would utilize smaller, localized spaces to communicate, and, in contrast, regional and local communication favoured more widespread globalized/digital mechanisms. While seemingly illogical at first glance, size and reach preferences are anything but. A whisper can speak volumes, as does one shouting for emphasis. A government capable of successful communication in a confined communication space can speak to its connection with populations to the lowest level, and with authenticity. On the flipside, a smaller communication campaign with a need for inter/national transmission conduits may be one reasoning for issue saliency well beyond its small geographic footprint. Online, both point to recipes for communication going viral.

Looking even deeper into conduit utilization, Frost discovered official entities prefer communicating through physical documents in said smaller spaces, and emphasized educating their constituents.[11] Conversely, smaller organizations preferred online spaces that favoured nuanced dialog. Finally, scholar Tait Brimacombe found format most important, to include gender of the communicator/s.[12] Her research is highlighted for its uniqueness, but also for the lessons to be learned. For example, in the South Pacific island nation of Vanuatu, the world's most volcanic impacted country, disaster readiness and preparedness is accomplished through messages embedded within female community theatre, their preferred method of mainstream communication.

On a global scale, one comprised of a saturated, continuously broadcasting, and seemingly endless media environment, getting through the white noise of boundless information access and of unknown quality can be a burden. It can be expected that individuals may very well dismiss even extremely important information, by accident.[13] "Fake news" ultimately equates to crying wolf at would be crises to promote specific agendas and/or exploit populations of interest for commercial or other gains. Fake news persists because few have the time or wherewithal to discern between fact and fiction, as well as how and why they should instil confidence in some messages over others.

Extending this reasoning even further, Project Heather Lazrus and her team conducted research on how wide variations in risk knowledge can predict response to risk eventuality.[14] As suspected, even amongst smaller populations, there

will always be knowledge gaps on key risk topics, even ones most culturally familiar to them. Misunderstanding and misperception can and will limit the effectiveness of response to even the best strategic communication during crises. Ignorance can produce incorrect response to risk warnings, and with it potentially catastrophic consequences. Sadly, few researchers address these knowledge gaps beyond educational components, ignoring equal if not more important aspects of knowledge and language.[15] Also, cultural model simulations do a decent job at reflecting population specifics in their calculations, but rarely incorporate cultural aspects beyond this.

RISK AND CULTURE

Social psychologist Geert Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory[16] has long provided an empirical method to articulate how factors (e.g. power distance index, individualism versus collectivism, uncertainty avoidance, etc.) influence cross cultural communication. Some theorists dug deeper into specific cultural differences in thinking. For instance, Professor Michael Varnum and his research team found cognitive differences between Westerners and East Asians. Specifically, "Westerners tend to be more analytic and East Asians tend to be more holistic." Combined with cultural dimensions, how a group or groups in simulation are framed might posit an approach to risk whereby "priming independence leads to analytic cognition, whereas priming interdependence leads to holistic cognition."[17]

Further, when applied to complex problems, those in individualist and collectivist cultures confront risk in decision-making process differently.[18] To oversimplify, individualist cultures might be expected to focus on the task itself. In contrast, collectivistic cultures may explore the views of others who surround them, and deploy values to investigate social aspects of a problem (as opposed to the rapid path to a solution). From a simulation perspective, decision-making within this binary (risk taking/avoidance) can also be modelled on vertical and horizontal planes of hierarchy, and, in doing so, predict in what power structure within a broad culture one might produce a specific decision chain.[19]

A key criticism in modelling culture within risk simulations is on the understated role of personality in an internet era. Hofstede-derived models do not adequately represent how and where individual personality intersects with broad cultural

dimensions. When these theories were being developed, and in assessing risk, personality was perceived to have only a marginal effect and/or be moderated by a group in a cultural setting. Today, researchers find personality a major factor in politics through the dynamics of "turbulence" and its rapid escalation online.[20]

Perhaps more problematic of these Hofstede-style models are their assumptions of communication being deployed only in cultures where people are enacting rational, predictable behaviours based on perfect information. Culture-attenuated, risk-based decision-making strategies need to take into account misperception and ignorance. Moreover, Hofstede-esque models also assume that all cultures perceive information and make assessments about said information relatively equally. This is a glaring oversimplification for political topics, of which the internet has made politics itself more pluralistic.

Simply put, perceptions are not reality. When you ask people to guess basic facts about a social population, they often get it very wrong. Bobby Duffy, Director of the Policy Institute at King's College London, developed a "Misperceptions Index" across 30 countries. (In 2018, the most accurate two countries were Sweden and Germany, the worst two being Italy and the United States. Canada was sixth worst and Australia fourth worst).[21] All cultures express a form of "emotional innumeracy," with the affective quality of this misperception being important. As people tend to "overestimate what we worry about as much as worrying what we overestimate," cause and effect is reflexive, with facts seldom the only answer in managing risk estimations.[22]

Similarly, human cultures, when assessing slow, incremental positive change, overemphasise negative images and information. To explain, social neuroscientists discovered that negative images leave a much more lasting and powerful negative impact than positive ones in that direction.[23] Not only do we perceive things are getting worse as we head into the future, we also possess "rosy retrospection" of the past as it moves away.[24] This outlook, in turn, causes a series of heuristic and cultural biases that filter risk perception. The internet now has algorithms that may enhance and amplify these biases in communication.

CONCLUSION

Most wargaming simulations test what would happen if a certain plan or set of actions and decisions with a set of people was put into affect. Recently the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) implemented a wargame design with an opposite approach. Instead, the game proposes a predetermined outcome to which the simulation derives ways to deduce how to get there. Substantiating this philosophy, DARPA spokesman Jared Adams suggested, "to shift from a 'simulation' mindset to thinking about the creation of the rules of the game itself…given a desired set of strategic outcomes…define the rules of the game in such a way that the decisions will lead to that."[25]

To return to our starting point: to properly assess risk, we should no longer "skate to where the puck is going, not where it has been" rather assume "the puck is already here." Future considerations of risk in military contexts must better incorporate advances in social science and its game theory. In turn, artificial intelligence and computation must also consider risk mechanisms when devising simulation models.

Still these discussions must accept technological and cultural norms inherent in an internet age. Transcultural affordances of the internet have twisted and turned many of the approximations of cultural generalization we have long relied upon to model culture. Risk assessment will need to build these into simulations reflexively, perhaps even stochastically live, as a simulations progress.

Power, responsibility, strategic communication and culture must be part of this equation. They are potent and known variables, ones that will change the rules of engagement and also available scope of outcomes. They must be noted and modelled when forming simulation models, also in explaining findings or the seeming absence thereof. The competence trap is potentially most dangerous when it is applied to calculating and preparing for future risk.

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CHAPTER 10

LACK OF DIVERSITY AND THE RISK OF FAILING TO EVOLVE

Dr. Tone Danielsen

When it comes to state-of-the-art technology and disruptive technology that might prove to be a game-changer in operations, special operations forces (SOF) pride themselves in being innovative, flexible, quick to implement new things, and gaining inspiration from the best practices in the field. When it comes to changing social practices, such as increasing the diversity of the personnel, the changes seem to be neither quick, nor inspired by the stories of when things actually worked.

Armed conflicts and special operations are complex and unpredictable. If units, or branches, lapse into self-satisfaction it constitutes a great risk.[1] In big SOF communities such as the United States (US) and Canada, units can specialize. In a small state such as Norway, units cannot specialize on one doctrinal task, but must be able to conduct operations across the full spectrum. Diversity is therefore a force multiplier. Today the badged operators of the Norwegian Special Operations Forces (NORSOF)[2] are constituted mainly of white, heterosexual males from the same sociocultural class. Homogeneous teams tend to work as echo chambers. To seek diversity in SOF does not mean lowering the entry bars. Cultural, linguistic, and gender diversity enhances capability, because out-thinking the enemy requires "the best of the best"[3] of the entire population.

Narratives on wars and gendered discourses shape our mindsets collectively and define standards. Historically, women have always been part of armed conflicts as victims, supporters, caretakers, in the rear echelon – but also in different roles as combatants. The histories of wars are mainly written by men, for men, about men. Women are often given the role of whore or Madonna – Mata Hari or grieving mother – but rarely described as warriors. While men can, *qua* males, claim to be

part of a several-thousand-years-old tradition, every new generation has to reinvent roles and an identity for women warriors. To debunk some taken-for-granted truths, therefore, we use some historical experiences and a more recent Norwegian pilot project in this chapter as cases to provide some stories of "best practice."

Most diversity programs within the military have over the last decades focused on equal opportunity capability.[4] I am not a "gender researcher." Over two decades, I have worked by, with, and through the armed forces. Over a decade, I have done research on the culture of special operations forces (SOF)[5] – and they are all men.[6] Apparently men in the workforce are not gendered; men are the standard, women are gendered.[7]

Cultural, institutional changes in a high-status male domain are challenging at all levels. To change mindsets and practices – to acknowledge and embrace diversity – takes good role-models for both men and women. It takes wise, courageous, and strategically thinking leaders. Retelling parts of our history places the old narrative in a new context. Shedding light on taken-for-granted truths can seriously damage hard-programmed stereotypes, and give new insight and awareness. This chapter is not about minorities or women's rights to have equal opportunities. It describes and discusses diversity in SOF and why lack of diversity can hamper SOF in evolving and reducing their combat effectiveness. It is high time to retell parts of our history and critically review the criteria SOF use to select and evaluate their personnel, so they fit our global era, not the last millennium.

HIS-STORY OF WAR

In ancient times, most civilizations had goddesses of war in their mythology. The Egyptian Sekhmet was depicted as a lioness, the fiercest hunter known to the Egyptians. She was seen as the protector of the Pharaohs and led them in warfare. The Greek Athena was associated with warfare and wisdom, much like the Roman Minerva. The Vikings had Freya, the goddess of war and fertility. The Vikings were known to be good warriors. The shield maidens had a higher standing in society and better legal right during the Viking era than women in Scandinavia received until modern times. Freya was loved and worshiped by both men and women.

All these goddesses had dualistic aspects: the female deities gave life and took life, they were both constructive and destructive, and they were predictable and fair.

The male deities of war, such as Ares, Mars, and Tyr, embodied the physical aggression and overwhelming force necessary for success in war, but were not depicted as having balance and duality. They epitomized the violent and physical untamed aspect of war, in contrast to their female counterparts who often represented military strategy and intelligence.

In essence, in ancient times, male and female deities were depicted with both strengths and weaknesses, and they were worshiped by all who needed their support or protection. In monotheism, the conglomerate of gods and goddesses became one almighty male God, and female aspects of most kinds disappeared or were subdued. The order of things became defined by men, and the cacophony of stories was reduced to his-story; our history.

War has traditionally been a male domain, and studies and stories on wars are a male-dominated genre. In the military, requirements are set by men, for men, to fulfill what men define to be the demands.[8] Most of what we know about wars we have heard from male voices, coloured by male perceptions and impressions, with male words – presented as if they are neutral and objective statements.[9]

This is also very much the case in shaping the Norwegian narratives from World War II.[10] The history of war is about glorious battles and heroes – mostly dead men. Women are still often discussed as "a problem," "a thing," "an issue," or other categories with negative connotations. Every now and then women are discussed in the public limelight as "a capacity *we* might need." The military "we" is still male.

WOMEN'S DIVERSE ROLES DURING WORLD WAR II

Women have always contributed in vital, substantial, and different ways during wars and conflicts, just like men. In times of armed conflicts and total war such as World War II, the entire population was engaged. While men traditionally have had a "natural" place in military organizations, and thereby are also granted the protection, rights, and benefits that the status as combatant gives, women were often not given this privilege. After World War II, women went back to what was seen at the time as their "natural" place as housewives and mothers. Most of these women never talked about their wartime experiences, nor their competences, and have not been part of the great narrative of World War II.

It seems that during total war, when the nation is under a massive threat or occupation, the military organization is perfectly capable of attracting (or drafting) the best from the *entire* population to accomplish the mission. The British Special Operations Executive (SOE) is a perfect example. Women's roles not only in industry and hospitals, but also in direct support to the ongoing war as code breakers at Bletchley Park is today well-documented.[11] The Special Forces Club in London, the first club in London allowing both male and female members, bears witness to brave operators of both genders that served their country during World War II. However, after the war, when the narratives were shaped, women's role in combat did not seem to fit in to the his-story. In novels and movies, as previously noted, women are often reduced to the two well-known categories of whore and Madonna, and their services as commanders and operators in high-risk operations are often treated with silence. As such, its important to examine two examples from Norway.

THE COMMANDER

Eva Kløvstad née Jørgensen became the de facto leader of one of the largest and most contested Military Organization districts (i.e. Milorg D25) in Nazi-occupied Norway during World War II. This district was one of the most dangerous areas, because it was on the border with neutral Sweden with many escape and smuggling routes. The Nazis maintained a keen focus on the border activity, and continuously raided the area to break the Norwegian opposition.

Eva Kløvstad became involved in resistance activity in the summer of 1944. She was asked by the local Milorg Commander Christian Juell Sandberg to become his secretary. Eva worked hard and learned fast. When their chief of transportation had to use one of his own escape routes to Sweden in October, Eva also took over his tasks since she already had a vast network in the transportation business, gained through her official work as a secretary at the national transport office in Hamar. From that point, she became the individual organizing the refugee routes to Sweden and the smuggling routes with weapons and goods from Sweden.

In December Sandberg was shot by the Gestapo during an escape attempt and he died the following day in hospital. The week after, his second-in-command fled to Sweden. So, Eva was left alone, and went to Oslo to meet the Milorg central command. She was given directions and objectives, plus a suitcase with money, ration cards, a radio, and a gun, which she brought back and hid safely in her home.

After Christmas, a new commander Kolbjørn Henriksen came to Hamar. Kolbjørn had been conducting resistance activities since the occupation of Norway, but he had been forced to flee and had lived under cover for three years. He had a lot of knowledge and competence in resistance work. However, the three years of hiding had taken their toll: his nerves were worn thin, he didn't dare to sleep in the same place two nights in a row, he stayed inside, his staple diet was strong coffee and cigarettes, and he was incapable of making decisions. Additionally, he did not know the area or the locals. Kolbjørn wanted Eva to become the commander, because she was young and strong and knew the locals and the organization. But she refused. Milorg was a very conservative organization, and officially women only gained access in 1944. Eva figured that being a young woman, she would not gain the respect and authority required to fill the role. The two had complementary competences, and so they decided they would make a good team together. Later Eva recruited Andreas Murstad, who owned a local grocery store and had a vast network for gaining goods. The three of them made up the command team.

Eva used the codename "Jakob" and functioned de facto as the commander until the war ended. The team worked, because they had complementary competences and they were smart enough to use their differences for the greater good. For instance, they rebuilt the Milorg D25 organization that was crushed after the many German raids during 1944, and kept the refugee and smuggling routes to Sweden working.

In April and May 1945, soldiers started to return from training camps in Sweden and England. Some of them had previously had commanding positions, but the command trio worked well and was not challenged by those newly returned. Very few knew that their commander Jakob was a woman. Even Eva's fiancé Tor Kløvstad did not know who Jakob was. When she told him during their three days of Easter holiday, he demanded that she quit, which of course was out of the question. She could not leave the command team at this crucial point of the operation, and he had no other choice but to accept and continue as her subordinate.[12]

When peace came in May 1945, Kløvstad was parading in front of her troops: proud, armed, and in uniform. The Nazi occupation was over. A few weeks after, a new command team took over. In June, when the King returned, she was not allowed to parade in front of the Royal palace like the other commanders and troops – because she was a woman. "It was cruel to realize how little they actually appreciated me. No one ever expressed any regrets about that decision afterwards."[13]

When the male soldiers and officers, who had been hiding or in training camps in safe territories for most of the war, returned, they claimed their spot in the limelight. The male shaping of the narrative had already started, and she did not fit in. All personnel in these resistance organizations swore a pledge of secrecy never to speak of their work after the war. Regardless, many chose to tell their stories. Some felt the urge to correct the "official versions," some might have needed to tell their stories for therapeutic reasons, quite a lot made good money out of their heroic stories. Eva stayed a silent professional, and had nothing but contempt for the ones selling stories about their own deeds and courage. She gave for the first time some glimpses of her story in the late 1970s and never wanted to write her memoirs.[14]

A young woman of 23 had risen to the challenge in times of war. When the commander was shot, and the second-in-command fled to Sweden, she did what had to be done. In grave danger to her own life, she had cycled and skied many miles every night to transport weapons and money, organize the troops, bring messages, and give orders. She built a gender-mixed command team that worked flawlessly because it utilized diversity and complementary competences. She continued her work in leading the military organization until Norway again was a free country. She had accomplished the mission. She was finally awarded the King's Medal of Merit in 1990.[15]

THE SPY AND CODE-BREAKER

During World War II, Norway was the site of several major SOF operations. One of the best known is the heavy water sabotage in 1943, which was in fact a sequence of sabotage missions, to prevent the German nuclear research project from acquiring heavy water (deuterium oxide). The production facility at Vemork was successfully destroyed by the SOE-led Company Linge: a Norwegian SOF team.[16] The "Telemark raid" was later evaluated by the SOE as one of the most successful acts of sabotage of World War II.[17] The mission had all the quintessential elements of a special operation; it was approved at the highest level; it prevailed where conventional units could not be used; it utilized minimum force and guile; and the operators succeeded efficiently in denying the Germans access to resources central to their atomic bomb production.[18] This mission is well known in SOF literature.

Sigrid Green is not. She did significant intelligence work on the production plant in Vemork, prior to the famous Telemark sabotage raid. Green was a British citizen,

engaged in the SOE because she was bilingual. Her mother was Norwegian and she was seconded to the Norwegian Resistance. She went to Norway in a submarine, assigned to gain key information about the factory. At the time, women were not allowed on submarines, so she had to pretend to be a boy. She spent a couple of months in the area, and gathered crucial intelligence later used in preparation for the sabotage raid. But she is hardly ever mentioned in history books.

Norway does not have many heroic stories after World War II, but the few worth mentioning have been told time and time again. There are several books and films about the Telemark raid. There is also an "epic SOE exfil" that is a central part of the Norwegian narrative and source of SOF pride: SOE operator Jan Baalsrud's escape to Sweden after all his SOE team members were killed when *Operation Martin* failed in 1943. Baalsrud was awarded several orders and medals after the war.[19] The story became known through David Howarth's book *We Die Alone: A WWII Epic of Escape and Endurance* (1955), and in 1957 the story was made into the Oscar-nominated movie *Nine Lives*. Since 1987, there has been an annual public march along his 200 km escape route. In 2014, two operators from NORSOF walked Baalsrud's escape route with World War II equipment, and made a documentary for the Norwegian broadcasting service.[20] The last remake of the story *The 12th Man* came in 2017, and is one of the most expensive films made by a Norwegian producer.

After finishing her intelligence gathering mission at Vemork, Green walked to neutral Sweden, and escaped in the empty bomb bay of a Mosquito aircraft back to London. Even today, with modern technology, that is a long, physically tough, and hazardous exfiltration for a single operator. For a young woman, travelling by herself in times of war, this must have been dangerous, harsh, and demanding. Given the level of detail we know about SOE activity in Norway, it is rather interesting that we do not know *anything* about SOE operator Sigrid Green's work and how she managed to get herself to Sweden, a distance of more than 500 kilometres.

Sigrid Green was later employed at Bletchley Park, and worked on breaking German codes with the help of the Enigma machines. Unlike most SOE personnel, she was not awarded a medal after the war. Green received a certificate and badge from Prime Minister David Cameron in 2010 in honor of her vital service during World War II, a year before she died. Like so many other women working in resistance activities, intelligence, and as SOE operators during World War II, she was a true

silent professional. She kept her oath of silence and never spoke about her wartime experiences. There must be documents in SOE's archives telling about her deeds and courage, but so far no historians or others working in the archives have found her stories worth telling. The only online trace of this fearless woman is found in short obituaries.[21] His-stories still seem more worthwhile to tell than her-stories in the shaping of epic war narratives.

Women did important work in intelligence organizations during World War II, as operators and in the command teams. The second-in-command in the Norwegian intelligence organization (XU) during World War II was Anne-Sofie Østvedt. Similar to "Jakob," she took a male code name "Aslak" to hide the fact that she was a woman.[22] Intelligence officers, like Sigrid Green, worked hard, often under terrible conditions, and always under the threat of being caught and severely punished. They worked undercover and could neither trust anyone, nor tell others what they were doing and how. They had to be truly innovative, flexible, creative, skilled, and able to keep their mouths shut. History proves that most women involved in grey zone activities during World War II were able to keep their silence, while many men embraced the opportunity after the war to brag about their deeds, adding a little extra, and by this made a career for themselves.

THE NORSOF LEGACY

> During the cold war we selected men that were capable of carrying heavy backpacks, walking long distances, and keeping on walking. The threats and the conflicts are different now. Operators still need to be capable of conducting physically exhausting missions, but in addition to that they need to be creative, flexible, and analytical. We need a diversity of personnel today who can handle the full range of missions. What we need the most is personnel willing and able to change and adjust. And we need good thinkers. If we cannot adapt we are useless and out of business.
>
> Former Commander, *Marinejegerkommandoen* (MJK)
> (Naval Special Operations Commando)

The formal structure of NORSOF has been continuously changing over the years and so have their tasks and missions. However, organizations are fundamentally shaped by the social structures that existed at the time of their formation and have a

peculiar capacity to freeze culture.[23] World War II, and the culture of the 1950s and 1960s when the Naval and Army Special Operations Commandoes were founded, their selection criteria, their standards, their stories and what these stories tell shed light on their culture today. The Telemark raid is used as the model of an exercise, authors are tasked to write books about World War II operations, and rituals are reinvented to trace their history and self-described identity back to the SOE, its heroic forefather from World War II.

Arctic operations are still the core of all military basic training in Norway, but most NORSOF operations today are no longer mainly about the physical strength required to undertake long infiltration routes on skis, poor equipment, or the need to kill wild animals to gain enough food during harsh winter months. NORSOF has state of the art technology, and their missions over the last decades have mostly been far away from Norway. The operators still need to be physically fit and mentally strong. But increasingly important are their ability to mentor locals during their Military Assistance missions, meaning they need cultural awareness, languages, diplomatic skills, flexibility, and creativity, as well as academic education to make good analyses while planning and executing missions. In the global era, SOF units need diversity.

Norway has a strong self-ascribed identity as gender equal. Norwegian working life claims to be gender neutral, and sexuality is not part of professional working life. The sweeping male dominance denies gender as a factor in social settings. Gender contains a capacity to generate concrete difference, and so women represent a threat to male cohesion. Single-gender male cohesion constitutes a powerful arena for reciprocal confirmation, acceptance, and recognition. In male hierarchies, it is an agreement on which "things" are desirable and who controls access to those scarce things. Those things can be position and rank, prestige missions, tasks, money and women.

Women are then not personified but *the* "thing between men."[24] The armed forces, like the rest of the workforce, are considered an asexual arena. SOF units need strong cohesion and their asexual kin-like relations – the "family" and the "brotherhood" – allow for the intimacy needed to make it work in everyday life and operations. So, women have a considerable potential to threaten males' mutual recognition and reproduction of cohesion. Norwegian women can, and even do every now and then, refuse to be the thing between men.

There are still many assumptions on gender, hard-programmed ideas, and glass-ceilings that have been broken decades ago in most other spheres in society apart from the military. International research on gender in the military has discussed different aspects: while men might be able to be programmed to kill, it is not as easy to program men to neglect women;[25] women in assault units are not a good idea, because it will make for internal conflict in the teams;[26] and women need to adjust to an all-male culture and find ways to connect without triggering sexual responses.[27]

The evergreen topic is that women are not as physically strong as men. Even though the differences within the "category of men" are bigger than between men and women on an individual basis, it is well known that men are physically stronger than women, in general. On the other hand, women are smarter than men, in general. We know this because school test results measure all Norwegian children every year; girls have better results in most topics, except in physical education, and it has been like this for decades.[28] Unconventional operations are also about outthinking the enemy,[29] therefore SOF had better make sure they have the best of the best-thinkers and analysts in their units.

While it seems rather easy to implement diversity when it comes to technology, diversity amongst personnel is a whole different story. Military operations are complex, both in planning and execution, and SOF need the best-suited operators. Diversity enhances SOF units' capability to accomplish their strategic missions. There are operational requirements for diversity and female operators, including in SOF, because homogeneous teams with white, heterosexual males only are not necessarily best-suited for the full spectrum of missions.

SOF operators have a military career in an all-male world. They learn from their male instructors, together with their male peers, and they have male commanders. Aspirants become operators without female role-models. Their legacy and military narrative is all male. The historical "best practice on diversity" cases are not taught in military academies and the epic stories where the hero is a female operator are seldom told around the bonfire. It seems that the SOF community lacks good empirical cases on when diversity works well. One size does not fit all. Importantly, the NORSOF community has tried different ways and models over the years.

MIXED TEAMS – THE URGE FOR DIVERSITY

During my 18 months of fieldwork in MJK, gender was often discussed in assault squadrons. "There are several missions where we are in need of female operators, especially in urban reconnaissance," said one squadron commander. Urban surveillance and undercover operations are tactically difficult to accomplish with single-gender teams. Anyone knowing what to look for can spot a SOF team a mile away: extremely well-trained young men dressed in jeans, fleece jackets, caps, sunglasses, expensive dirty sneakers, and a long time since the last haircut. Young men loitering together stand out, and people automatically presume they are up to no good. A "couple" is barely given a second glance.[30] Special reconnaissance, one of the core responsibilities of SOF, will in the years to come primarily take place in urban areas. An all-male team is not able to release its full potential when it comes to conducting urban special reconnaissance.[31] Urban operations need diverse teams to blend in, but also to plan and coordinate the missions.

Many *Marinejegers*, badged naval operators, knew this from their own experience. From 1995 to 2005, a Norwegian intelligence unit called *Section for special reconnaissance*, now commonly known as *E14*, was operating. This unit specialized in human intelligence (Humint).[32] The grand idea behind this unit was to match a male *Marinejeger* (or another male with military/police background) and a female analyst. Operating as a couple, they did not draw much attention to themselves. Half of the world's population is women, and in some societies men and women lives are rather segregated and men outside of the family do not have access to women. Female operators can talk much more easily with, and get to know, local women, in ways male operators never can. Female operators can also gain access to local men, in contexts male operators cannot – not by bringing them to the bed-chamber, but just by interacting with them in a less threatening and competitive way.[33] With a gender-mix, these Humint teams were culturally capable of integrating with the entire population, and with their diverse skill-set they maintained a high level of security and produced excellent analysis. The success of E14's work was due to the team's complementarity.

A side effect was that these *Marinejegers* became confident in working closely with a female partner, who possessed a very different mindset and skill set, often for very long periods. These were smart, well-educated women, who did their equal share of the work, and stood their ground. The women in E14 were not "the thing between

men," but their equals. So, many *Marinejegers* have experiences from harsh times in missions where they were dependent on their female partner, women they knew would easily outthink them, and the enemy. They did not feel threatened by it; it was regarded as an asset and a strength.

From time-to-time during my fieldwork, personnel in MJK wanted a woman's viewpoint and opinion. This meant that I was also given a role *qua* woman, but not solely or primarily. I was invited by the Commander because of my competence, not because I was a woman. I spent almost two decades working my way from the top of the military hierarchy down: from the Staff University College, via the Ministry of Defense, to studying tactical units. My reverse journey has given me a different insight on the military culture, structure, and operations, than military personnel who work their way from the bottom up. However, reflections on gender and age were among my concerns before I started the fieldwork. I am a mature woman, then in my mid-40s, old enough to be the mother of half of the personnel in MJK. That is a factor I cannot change. Every fieldwork situation is different, and the skill of the anthropologist lies in responding to the situation. Toward the end of my fieldwork, we had a party, and I was chatting with some operators in the bar. Their views were somewhat surprising to me:

> *Haakon: You know – you could never have conducted this fieldwork if you were a man!*
>
> *Me: Why not?*
>
> *Hans: It is very hard for outsiders to enter this unit, especially for men. They always want to show off and compete. . . . No way would we have let a man come this close. It's different with a woman.*

The natives speak back. Gender, age, and social status are factors in all social interactions.[34] Research done by men with a military background highlights the benefits of being a man with a military background in order to get access and valuable information in masculine military cultures.[35] Contrary to what many male researchers assert, the *Marinejeger*s claimed it was easier to include a female anthropologist than a male one. They stated that they would not have let a man into their inner circles, which correlates with my observations during fieldwork.

One of the first things anthropologists learn is: What people say and what they do isn't necessarily in accordance with what *they say they do*. When gender is

discussed in a military context, it is framed as a problem, something very difficult to deal with. I was prepared to be excluded from activities, to be met with a solid dose of patronizing attitude, bullying, and harassment in different ways, which has happened time and again at all levels during my career in the armed forces. But personnel in MJK proved themselves to be truly SOFish – loyal to the commander's intent and finding unconventional solutions to bring me along. To be a female researcher in a SOF unit is not better or worse than being a male researcher, but it is different and can therefore give new insights. Gender combined with age, which I had assumed would be my Achilles heel, proved to be my strength.

Tension is released systemically in MJK. *Marinejegers* release tension by fighting (i.e. releasing endorphins, adrenaline, and testosterone), hard physical workouts (a mild form of actual fighting), and talking things through in formal and informal debriefing and defusing. Sexuality is a tension without systemic release. It has to be dealt with, just like other tensions and conflicts. There are no easy way to program young men and women to ignore desire and sexual tension. On the other hand, it is not easy to program men to kill or control aggression either, but this has been done in MJK since it was founded in the 1950s.

The #metoo campaign made it clear that the military, like the rest of Norwegian society, is permeated with sexism. Research indicates, however, that women working with SOF units are less exposed to sexual harassment than in conventional units.[36] *Marinejeger*s have already proved that they can work on equal terms with women in small teams. All badged operators are men, but it is women who work in staff positions. In an employee survey conducted in the Norwegian Armed Forces in 2017, no sexual harassment was reported in MJK. Gender is an issue, but like all other complex issues in special operations we ought to investigate what works and what not, and learn from the best practices.

THE RANGER PLATOON: SINGLE-GENDER TEAMS

The NORSOF all-female special reconnaissance platoon – *The Rangers platoon* (*Jegertroppen*, also called "The hunter platoon") – is another Norwegian case. In this "SOF light" unit conscripts are given basic training and have throughout the years been the main pool for further selection to become SOF operators. Male and female conscripts are selected to the same criteria, but trained in

gender-specific teams. This platoon, established as a trial project in 2013 by FSK (*Forsvarets spesialkommano*, the Army SOF unit), has proved that the females master hard-core military tasks as well as the males, when not overrun by men. The two teams are trained in parallel, but do parts of the training together. Gender-segregated training gives the young conscripts an arena in which to develop their skills and confidence across the whole spectrum of the platoon's tasks, without being pulled down or overrun by the opposite gender. This way, all the trainees benefit from the two genders' complementary strengths, and both teams improve through healthy competition. The male team is encouraged to improve in tasks where they were outperformed by the women, such as shooting and unconventional thinking. The female platoon's repeated higher score on their sniper tests (precision shooting) works as motivation for the males to work harder and refine their skills.[37]

The Norwegian broadcasting company made a documentary on the Rangers platoon. In the first episode, we follow the team on the ten day-long exercise *Deer Hoof*. The women carry 60 kilogram rucksacks plus weapons (more than their own weight), and undertake long marches in harsh weather, with little food, and even less sleep. At the end of the exercise, Home Guard soldiers with dogs and state of the art equipment are used as "enemy forces." But the women are smart. They use all they have learned. They realize they are about to get caught in an ambush, so they choose a different route. The main instructor states:

> They made a good decision! With their level of experience, that was well done. It was not according to our plan… We have used this exercise over decades, it always worked: The conscripts get a "good beating" from the older and much more experienced Home Guard soldiers. But the girls were outthinking all of us. I am very proud![38]

When the males were asked about the differences in performance between the two platoons, several of them stated that the women were better at planning missions, both in structure and in their focus on detail. Both the male conscripts and the instructors highlighted the women's accuracy and attention to detail as important and an operational strength, and something the males should also strive for. One paratrooper said proudly: "We are actually better than the women at cleaning up our own mess." His grin and the use of "actually" indicated that he thought it was pretty cool to beat the women on their home turf."[39]

Hard selection and training is a rite of passage – a shakedown cruise. Not surprisingly, strong camaraderie and bonding are the inevitable by-products of spending time together doing difficult things.[40] Several studies on women in the Norwegian Armed Forces have discussed the military assertion that female teams are so ridden with conflicts and enmity that it is preferable to keep women few in number and mixed with men. The "queen bee behaviour" observed in some units is often a combination of several factors: an ideology of military uniformity, an expectation that women should fit seamlessly in as one of the guys, and equal treatment in settings where the man and masculinity is the norm and ideal.[41] To be "one of the boys" is the aim; to be associated with "the girls" is an identity threat for young conscripts, or worse a proof of failure – for both genders. The one year of conscription is the beginning of the military institutionalized apprenticeship. In this socializing process, female conscripts quickly learn to distance themselves from the category "women," and everything associated with it.

Research on the Rangers platoon has dispelled some of the institutionalized myths: that women are "whiners," "slackers," "bitches," "sluts," "dykes," and "favoured."[42] The female conscripts were allowed to fail and succeed in their own terms, and not by a male standard. They also achieved as strong cohesion and self-confidence as the all-men team. Diplomat Madeleine Albright explains how her education in all-girl schools formed her mindset. She revealed that there were women in all roles and positions, and gendered division of labor and tasks were impossible – the girls had to do everything themselves.[43] Albright knew women could lead and organize any kind of campaign, lead the sports team and the debating club, and be the editor of the school paper. The military is in many ways like other hierarchical institutions such as (boys) schools and (monk) monasteries; men are trained to accomplish all the tasks and have all the leading positions. Division of labor is not natural, but cultural – it is socially learned.

In the Rangers platoon, women had to fill all the roles and conduct all the tasks. Through this, the project has provided strong female role models for both males and females and has laid some former hard-programmed truths to rest. Reinforced and unhindered skill acquisition has contributed to experience-based data on women warriors as highly capable and militarily skilled, and has added new strengths to the unit.

The Rangers platoon was established as a trial project because FSK needed to recruit women for special operations where the soldier's gender matters. The commanders and instructors cultivated diversity and specialist skills through a pragmatic view of fairness as equity (different treatment) and equivalency (equal value). They did not expect, or want, the women to become one of the guys, or assimilate to masculine norms, standards, and ways of communication (style/humor).

In single-sex teams, any gendered division of labour is impossible. The women were provided with an unobstructed and unhampered opportunity to develop the professional skills, usually reserved for men in combat units. Combined, these factors enabled the female platoon to succeed and perform as professionals in hard-core military activities.[44] The young female conscripts in the Rangers platoon performed their military role with competence and professionalism. They were not forced to choose between their gender group identity and a professional masculine military identity – they were allowed to be both women and warriors.

THE PAST IN THE PRESENT – THE RISK OF FAILING TO EVOLVE

Gender is a "thing" in all social contexts. This chapter is not about equal opportunities or women's right to access all military units. It has been more than four decades (1977) since women formally gained access to the Norwegian Armed Forces. In 2015, Norway adopted gender-neutral conscription. Today, there are female personnel in most roles, including in strategic combat units as fighter pilots and submarine commanders, and in elite units as tank commanders, improvised explosive device experts, navigators, and paratroopers. The first female Head of Mission in the United Nations was Norwegian Major-General Kristen Lund. However, there are no badged female special operators.

Importantly, this chapter is about SOF's need for greater diversity to accomplish their future missions. The debate and controversy over women in the military has gone on for decades, probably longer. What the public normally learns about is the 10 percent of SOF high-end and high-order kinetic operations.[45] The public does not hear much about the bad experiences with gender dynamics during training and deployments.[46] Neither, do the public hear much about the failed missions, which ended badly due to poor planning in a pale, male echo chamber.

SOF missions are still physically hard, but carrying heavy rucksacks, walking long distances, and being able to keep on walking is not enough. Today, state-of-the art technology combined with good thinking trumps bulging triceps. The future calls for operators that are able to shoot well and out-think the enemy, as well as connect to, communicate with, understand, relate to, and influence a population as a whole. Since half of the world's population is women, NORSOF will not be able to do this in a relevant manner without women being integrated.[47]

It is about time to stop reproducing old criteria and hard-programmed truths, and start using the praised SOFish mindset to develop criteria and standards for what it takes to be "the best of the best" in our era. Increasing the number of physically fit, disciplined, white males of the same age and sociocultural background does not provide the complementarity units require to stay healthy, adaptable, and prepared for uncertainties. SOF will eventually have to call for personnel with ethnic, linguistic, sociocultural, and gender diversity. This does *not* mean lowering the standards. Rather, it means critically reviewing and adjusting the standards, criteria, basic training, and education so they fit our global era, not the last millennium.

Women have always taken part in wars, in all kinds of roles. But women warriors are not part of his-story of war, and so each generation has to reinvent the wheel. How do you make good, complementary teams with diversity? Whether teams are trained separately or together, operating in mixed or single-gender teams, will depend on the mission.

In this chapter, four rather diverse Norwegian cases have been presented: two from World War II and two more recent ones. During World War II, Norway was occupied by the Nazis. Norwegians from different parts of the population resisted, were supported and mentored by allied forces, and became involved in what the Germans considered illegal activities. After the commander of Milorg D25 was shot, a new command team rebuilt the organization. The formal leader was a man who did not know the area or the local people, and had problems with his nerves after being involved in resistance work throughout the war. The de facto leader was a young, psychologically robust, hardworking local woman, Eva Kløvstad aka Jakob, who rose to the tasks and proved to be an excellent organizer. She recruited a third member of the team, a local grocer. There are no known stories about gender-generated conflicts in the team. On the contrary, it seems the command team members utilized their diverse competence, skillset, age, and gender to

rebuild the organization and the escape- and smuggling routes to Sweden in an excellent way.

Additionally, the British SOE was known to recruit people with a wide variety of backgrounds. Being bilingual was seen as an asset, because fluency in a language and cultural knowledge meant the agent could go under cover as a local. Sigrid Green, a young female SOE agent, was sent to Vemork, assigned to gather intelligence on the heavy water production plant that was later sabotaged in the well-known Telemark raid. The interesting part is not that she went by herself, accomplished her mission, walked to Sweden, and returned to London with valuable information for the preparation of the raid, but rather that her story is not known. The stories about the young, brave men in Linge Company are told, retold, documented, analyzed, and made into screen versions time and again. Epic stories about heroines do not seem to fit into the his-stories of unconventional operations.

Relatedly, intelligence units have always had diverse teams, with team-members with complementary competence, language skills, different ages and gender to make sure they gain access to all kinds of milieus and communities. *Marinejeger*s proved they can work on equal terms with women, because some of them were assigned to mixed teams in E14. This gave them some valuable experience with diversity. Year later, they are not challenged, provoked, or insulted by women or men that can out-think them. In a *Marinejeger* team, all members have different specialties and no one is the best of the best at everything. This keeps them humble and constantly striving for improvement. They are professional and they respect others who have the required competence. Throughout my fieldwork, I showed respect by not building tension. They repaid that respect by protecting me from gossip and from anyone coming just a bit too close during beer-calls. I was never "overprotected" or "favoured." No one is in MJK: I was merely treated and respected as the others in the "family."

The final example was the Rangers platoon. It proves that female conscripts can be selected and trained on equal terms as male conscripts. Training conscripts in single-gender teams has given valuable data and laid some hard-programmed stereotypes and myths to rest. A SOF team is built on cohesion amongst the members, and in the female platoon they created a cohesive bond that was as strong as in the all-male platoon. The Rangers platoon is a trial project. None of the women have been badged after their conscription training was completed. So, we do not know if

and how they will work in actual operations. We do not have quantitative evidence that training together, or in parallel, will leach out all sexual and romantic interest.[48] Rather the contrary: Diversity has the propensity to create tension, friction, and cause challenges – that is inevitably part of life. Sexual tension and the frictions this causes are part of all organizations because they are part of life. Therefore leaders, including military commanders, must learn to deal with complexity and diversity.

The NORSOF community has up until today been small, so small that very few could make it through their career in SOF alone. Most of the personnel have also served in conventional units, and personnel from all services work in the SOF units. Even in the SOF teams, not all of them are badged. After all, SOF require communication, logistics, intelligence, and other sorts of personnel with certain qualifications depending on the mission. This means most of the NORSOF leaders have worked in conventional units, some even in other services, and so they are in some ways used to handling diversity.

Quantitative data may not exist, but we do have first-person accounts. Ronny, now part of the command team in FSK, has followed the development of the Rangers platoon closely. He was previously in command of gender-mixed teams at the Varanger Garrison on the Russian border. Even though this is in Northern Norway and very, very cold during winters, it is known to be one of the most attractive places for young Norwegians to undertake their one year of conscription. This garrison is the only place conscripts are on a real, actual mission: patrolling the Russian border. This garrison is well known to be a physically hard, but rewarding, place to serve and it has a good reputation amongst the soldiers. When Ronny started as a company commander, he gave his commander's intent: the mixed-gender teams had to work well because the patrols along the border take days and in bad weather up to weeks. This is how he told the story:

> I really enjoy working with the youngsters. They are coming directly from their homes and schools, and the transition to military life can be rather cruel. We have to make sure they learn what they need to in order to accomplish the mission, but we also have to attend to their safety and security, and make sure that they have a good time. After all, they give a year of their life to serve King and country. Conscripts are young, full of hormones, and we know they will try to push the limits – so you have to take precautions. I told them the first day that no (literal) "fuck ups" were

accepted. I added that I would get to know everything, so they better come and tell me up front. After a few weeks, we had a case. Early one morning, a boy and a girl came to my office. He was apparently ashamed when he told the story:

After the beer-call she got drunk, and wisely went back to the dormitory to sleep it off. When he returned – the teams lived in gender-mixed rooms – he realized she was drunk and asleep. He figured she would probably not wake up if he assaulted her, and she was too drunk anyway to fight back. He got undressed and slipped into her bed. But at that time the others came back. They did not accept an insult to their team mate. They pulled him out of the bed – and she woke up with the commotion of her roomies fighting. Their room-mates had "forced" them to come to my office together. He knew the deal: he was replaced in the border patrol unit, and had to serve the rest of his conscription in the camp.

Sexual assault and rape is not only "lousy" or "bad", it is illegal. We cannot have double standards; they must follow Norwegian law while serving. As commander you must be a good role model, stand your ground, and follow through. Before lunch, everyone in the camp knew the story. We had no more issues of this matter.

This chapter has provided some cases and stories on diversity – when it works and why. It will not reshape the discourse and ongoing debates about women in combat units. Changes in the military are achieved in everyday life, in the camps, amongst the practitioners. The military institutionalized apprenticeship reproduces stable communities with enduring practices, discourses, and meanings. Changes of paradigm do not happen overnight. A premise for structural and institutional change is a change in the mindset of both decision-makers and practitioners. To make military units well-suited to meet their new roles, tasks, and challenges, the units need leaders like Ronny, who deals with age, gender, level of competence, and other sorts of diversity as just another part of leadership and life. They need commanders like Jakob, who is hardworking, creative, and willing to build a command team with complementarity and focus on accomplishing the mission. They will need intelligence agents courageous enough to deploy alone to gather vital information, and strong enough to walk home. They need commanders willing to test new models and methods, either mixed teams or single gender teams, to empirically test new

concepts and ways to gain operational effects, as has been done in the NORSOF community. Diverse SOF units, with the capability to outthink the enemy and facilitate access to the locals across the globe, enhance operational capability.[49] Diversity can be a game-changer.

Maybe it still is the case that "women can be accepted, but do not belong in [American] SOF teams."[50] Gender roles are not the same all over the world, and so that needs to be addressed and investigated. People long to belong, but belonging cannot trump operational requirements. Gender is a factor, but even in the military it is not *the* issue. The military is a political tool, and Norwegian politicians have decided on gender-neutral conscription. The change is here to stay: women do belong in the military.

So, this is the time for neither complacency nor cocooning, but to evolve. SOF missions are no longer about "butcher[ing] and bolt[ing]" nor have they been for a long time.[51] SOF missions require good thinking and finesse. Increasingly, SOF units are given new roles and tasks: as global scouts, diplomats, ambassadors, interagency facilitators, and institutional peace builders.[52] If the heart of SOF lies in the operators' unconventional mindset, they need to start selecting and training the best thinkers from the *entire* cohort to reach its full potential. Whining about the challenge diversity produces does not change anything – using their innovative, flexible, and creative SOFish mindset does. Reframing the narratives and looking into the best practices helps. That is because the people and nations SOF personnel are sworn to defend depend on their capability to evolve, so they can accomplish their missions in complex environments. If SOF fail to evolve, they become "useless and out of business,"

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CHAPTER 11

AS MUCH FORCE AS NECESSARY: WHEN MINIMUM FORCE EQUALS MAXIMUM RISK

Mark Mackisoc

A key take-away from the 2018 Canadian Special Operations Forces Command (CANSOFCOM) symposium was Senior Associate Deputy Minister Jody Thomas's opening message regarding the need to be aggressive at correcting the public record when there is a misconception, essentially an important example of risk to reputation. This follows Lieutenant-General (retired) Mike Day's thoughts from the 2016 CANSOFCOM symposium where he pointed out that perceptions "determine what we value and what we ignore," especially in terms of operational capabilities.[1] This brings us to the physical and moral risk involved in the use of force by police officers and soldiers, and the intractable challenge created by expectations regarding the use of minimum force versus the legally established and operationally necessary standard authorizing as much force as is necessary. To illustrate the significance and potential consequences of this seemingly subtle distinction one must examine both historical and contemporary examples. The core argument of this chapter is that setting a standard requiring the use of minimum force creates unnecessary risk and expectations that are both unrealistic and legally incorrect. This argument applies to the policing profession, but many of the principles are analogous to military rules of engagement (ROE).

Police officers and soldiers have much in common, starting with the concept of unlimited liability where we are obligated and prepared to lay down our life for the values and ideals we have chosen to defend. This commitment presents both physical and moral risks. As Senator and former Ottawa Police Chief Vern White

stated at the 2016 CANSOFCOM symposium, "we all grew up in our respective careers carrying weapons fully ready to kill or be killed, to save the lives and liberty of others, as tragic as that sounds."[2] In policing, protecting the public involves use of force and other actions that can appear incongruent with the public guardian role. This perception is exacerbated when police actions are viewed and contemplated out of context or without the full understanding of how duties and authorities intersect when attempting to resolve a situation.

Similar challenges are faced by soldiers engaged in domestic operations, as well as various types of peace operations. Policing has historically been dominated by the warrior mindset, fighting crime and trying to be smarter, faster, and stronger than lawbreakers. Lord Tennyson's tercet "Theirs not to make reply, theirs not to reason why, theirs but to do and die" from *The Charge of the Light Brigade (1854)* speaks to both the nobleness and the horror of serving one's country as a warrior.[3] John Donne's couplet from *For Whom the Bell Tolls* (1624) "Each man's death diminishes me, for I am involved in mankind" is part of a haunting alliteration on death that speaks to the duty and responsibility humankind have to protect and care for each other.[4] In essence, all police officers should be capable of being warriors when required, but as society's expectations of police evolve, the duties of police officers have transformed to a much more proactive focus on risk and harm reduction and overall problem solving with a view towards maximizing community safety and well-being. Yet, when the unthinkable happens, we all expect officers to rely on their training and experience to respond to a lethal threat.

PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS OF POLICE LEGITIMACY

There are exceptions and exemptions that permit police to perform their unique duties. However, exemptions are not absolute, and in order to be valid, it is required that the officer have a subjective belief that the exemption is necessary, and this belief must also be objectively verifiable as being reasonable. In terms of how these actions are ultimately viewed, police legitimacy refers to the public having confidence and trust in the police, and the corresponding willingness to accept police authority if police actions appear to be both morally justifiable and appropriate.

Paradoxically, public confidence in police (and arguably the military as well) is often factored by citizens' understanding and opinion as to whether an officer's

actions are justified and appropriate. Yet, a citizen's assessment is subject to bounded rationality, where an individual's understanding of the problem is limited by the information that is available to them at the time they are forming their opinion, as well as their cognitive ability. Any police/public interaction where someone feels wronged can attract attention from bystanders and the media, and rarely involves an in-depth analysis of the facts (including background and specific circumstances) or legal justifications for the police action.

Most would probably agree that it is a tall order to expect the public to understand the complexities of the law, including legal precedents and police procedures such as use of force models and other policies that govern police behaviour and actions. The popular axiom "perception is reality" speaks not so much to anyone's belief that perceptions tend to be correct, but more so to the challenge of managing the impressions and the ensuing judgements that arise from subjective interpretations.[5] There are a number of behaviour attribution theories that attempt to explain this phenomenon, but the common denominator is a lack of information or understanding regarding the circumstances and motivations of the involved persons. Bystanders to a use of force incident may formulate a subjective construal of the incident without recognizing that a suspect's behaviour may not be consistent across different situations, or that even a slight change of circumstances can produce large differences in the behaviour.

Conversely, police officers are trained to focus on impact factors and profiled behaviours, which they rely upon to determine appropriate response options when facing a threat. However, it turns out these important explanations and justification may not offer much influence on the public's perceptions of lawfulness of police actions. Actual lawfulness and constitutionality of police actions has little influence on the public's perception as to the appropriateness of police behaviour. Consider the fact that while the appropriateness of police conduct is measured by supervisors and courts in terms of whether actions are legally justifiable and permissible, the public on the other hand judges police conduct by their own subjective standards of fair play to determine whether they believe police behaved properly.

Importantly, police officers are taught early on that their actions must be consistent with both the law and policies/procedures, with an emphasis on their authorities and what actions the law permits them to take to perform their duties. Little consideration or attention is given to the challenge of managing public expectations.

The reality is that effectiveness at crime fighting and lawfulness of police actions are two separate constructs, and although not mutually exclusive, police officers require the wisdom and experience to accept that they will typically be judged more on their methods than the results they achieve.

Quite simply, police officers are expected to follow the law and adhere to procedures, and therefore must carry out their duties with a focus on what they are legally permitted to do, yet, the public's perception of legality is "only marginally connected to actual legality."[6] This disconnect, where the police and courts focus on lawfulness whereas the public tends to evaluate situations based on procedural fairness, suggests that in colloquial terms, legal authorities and the public live more or less in two separate worlds. The police are stuck in the middle of this paradox with the expectation of appeasing both the public and the courts.

Another sometimes irreconcilable challenge that both police and military members can relate to is that duties and authorities often do not correspond. Case law (court decisions), policy and procedures, and statutory authorities all set limitations on operational effectiveness, putting the onus on the members to push the boundaries in order to fulfill their mandate or mission. Ultimately, it is imperative to maintain a high degree of professionalism and ensure all actions are consistent with, and intended to, achieve the goal of public safety.

THE RISK OF MINIMUM FORCE

When it comes to evaluating situations, there are few matters more contentious than a use of force incident. For soldiers, ROE may dictate the use of only the minimum force necessary when responding to a threat, particularly in the context of peacekeeping or domestic operations. This constraint speaks to the inherent conflict between risk to force/risk to mission, an example of which we see in one of the foundational principles of the United Nations (UN).

Prior to the advent of mandate enforcement, UN peacekeepers were expected to restrict use of force to the minimum necessary and only in self-defence. Military ROE are mission-specific criteria that outline the factors that must be considered prior to using lethal force. The *Queen's Regulations and Orders* (*QR&O*s) specify that "The law, that no more force may be used than is necessary, applies at all times……"[7]

Section 25 of the *Criminal Code of Canada* stipulates that a police officer or public officer acting in the lawful execution of his/her duties is authorized to use "as much force as is necessary" for the purpose of carrying out such duties.

Although worded in slightly different terms, both the *QR&O* and *Criminal Code* set the same threshold. Use of lethal force by police is constrained to situations where an officer believes there are reasonable grounds to fear death or grievous bodily harm to themselves or any person. This authority to use force must be clearly understood before any situational risk assessment can be made. In police use of force situations, officer perceptions and impact factors are key considerations towards assessing the level of threat and potential responses.[8]

As an illustration of the seemingly subtle difference between "as much force as is necessary" and "minimum force necessary," consider a suspect or belligerent who has displayed an intention to use a firearm.[9] Because a firearm is capable of inflicting serious bodily harm or death, police are trained to respond with a level of force intended to stop the threat, which involves firing as many rounds as necessary to the centre of body mass until the threat is stopped.

Conversely, employing "minimal force" would raise the expectation that the suspect be shot in the leg or arm in the hopes they will drop the firearm, an ideation that has no place outside of Hollywood action movies. Police are trained to then immediately commence lifesaving procedures on the suspect, a seemingly antithetical course of events until one accepts that the overarching goal is protection of the public, from one extreme to the other.

On the surface, perceptions are invariably positive whenever a threat is neutralized by police without deadly force, and arguably the level of heroism is magnified with the seriousness of the threat. After a 25-year-old male ran down pedestrians on Toronto's busy Yonge Street on 24 April 2018, he was arrested at gunpoint by a lone Toronto police officer.[10] The suspect carried out the motions of pulling out and pointing a handgun at the officer, even stating "I have a gun in my pocket." The officer had his firearm drawn and pointed at the suspect, and responded "I don't care. Get down. Get down or you'll be shot."[11] When the suspect did not fire on the officer or any of the members of the public, the officer appeared to conclude that the suspect was not actually armed, and accordingly holstered his own firearm and moved in to take the offender into custody. The officer received well-deserved

praise for the positive outcome, and his restraint and de-escalation techniques were lauded at many levels.

Toronto Police Chief Mark Saunders attributed the outcome of the event to a high standard of training where "officers are taught to use as little force as possible." While the Chief's comments accurately reflected the mindset of police officers whose sworn duty is to protect the public, it was a highly inaccurate interpretation of police use of force rules and procedure. Why does this matter when there was such a positive outcome? Because, the immediate reaction of many was to compare the incident to the fatal shooting by police of a mentally disturbed man on a Toronto subway car five years prior, even though these were very different sets of facts with equally different risk assessments by the involved officers.[12]

Ultimately, the Chief's comments perpetuated the myth and the public expectation that police should always use the minimum amount of force possible, as opposed to recognizing and focusing on the legally justifiable and often necessary means of stopping a lethal threat. There is nothing pretty about any use of force incident, and ultimately the responding police officers are forced to react to the circumstances with which they are presented. It is a message similar to that which was relayed in various forms by several speakers at the 2018 CANSOFCOM symposium, and can be traced back to Sun Tzu's "know the enemy …. The enemy gets to vote on the outcome."[13]

Understanding how use of force rules align is key when police and soldiers are working together but are authorized/expected to respond differently to threats. In August 1990, the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) was deployed on Operation Salon, better known as the Oka Crisis, with then Chief of the Defence Staff (CDS) General John de Chastelain stating, "The taking up of arms by an individual or group to right their causes or to settle their perceived wrongs must be countered by the forces of law and order or else anarchy in this country will prevail."[14] In scholar Timothy Winegard's comprehensive analysis of the Oka Crisis, the only articulation of the *Criminal Code* standard by a soldier was provided by Colonel (then Major) Alain Tremblay who lauded the restraint demonstrated by his soldiers when one member of the Royal 22nd Regiment (R22eR) was slashed with a knife. Tremblay explained, "from a Criminal Code point of view they could have shot him right there. Obviously the guy was injured but this was not a game and the military was not there to play a game."[15]

This statement represented an important assessment of the risk to force during a highly volatile situation. It also highlights the fact that escalation of force is an important concept that provides for a measured response taking into account all factors. For the CAF dealing with belligerents during the Oka crisis, escalation comprised mainly of fixing bayonets, deploying canisters of CS (tear) gas and firing warning shots into the air or ground.[16] One of the few instances where lethal force was pre-authorized as an initial response was if one of two C-7 rifles disarmed from soldiers during the 18 September 1990 Tekakwitha Island raid was pointed at soldiers, somehow implying that these weapons possessed greater lethality than other firearms that were routinely brandished or even pointed at troops.

Significantly, economy of force is an ingrained concept for military commanders, where any unnecessary use of force is viewed as an inefficient use of resources that invites retaliation by the enemy and opens the operation up to moral or legal condemnation. Similarly, no police officer starts their shift hoping for a violent confrontation. As evidenced by the "Decade of Darkness" of the 1990s, use of force incidents draw scrutiny that can impact the reputation and legitimacy of not only individuals but organizations as a whole.

Consequently, use of force rules must be understood and applied with the same legal precision that they will subsequently be judged. Moreover, they can leave no room for hesitation. There are limits to the amount and type of violence that can be used even in a professional fight, but there is no expectation of minimum force because control is not a 50/50 proposition, otherwise it becomes simply a battle of attrition. The actions of well-trained, professional police and soldiers speak for themselves, and both motivation and intent will often come across quite clearly based on the reasonableness of how we conduct ourselves.

ENDNOTES

1 Lieutenant-General (Retired) D. Michael Day, "Growing SOF in Chaos: Commanding, Leading and Managing," in Emily Spencer (Ed.) *In Pursuit of Excellence: SOF Leadership in the Contemporary Operating Environment* (Kingston: CANSOFCOM Education and Research Centre, 2017,) 101.

2 Vern White, "The Secrets of Leadership," in Emily Spencer (Ed.) *In Pursuit of Excellence: SOF Leadership in the Contemporary Operating Environment* (Kingston: CANSOFCOM Education and Research Centre, 2017), 3.

3 <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/45319/the-charge-of-the-light-brigade>, accessed 13 March 2019.

4 <https://www.poemhunter.com/poem/for-whom-the-bell-tolls/>, accessed 13 March 2019.

5 Richard Nisbett and Lee Ross, *Human Inference: Strategies and Shortcomings of Social Judgement*. (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1980, 120.) The authors use fundamental attribution error from the domain of social psychology to explain the way citizens attribute intention, motivation and character to events that they observe. They conclude that the adverse result is the underestimation of "the causal role of environmental influences" and the overestimation of the "degrees of cross-situational consistency" in the behaviour they observe.

6 Tyler Meares & J. Gardener "Lawful or fair? How cops and laypeople view good policing," *Social Science Research Network*, 2012, 105.

7 *Queen's Regulations and Orders*, Chapter 23.09(2), Section 23.15, Note D.

8 Impact factors consist of the officer's assessment of the situation taking into account their own skills and ability to deal with the incident as well as the level of threat posed. Considerations included environmental conditions (weather, darkness), the number of subjects involved and whether there are any weapons. Considerations for the subject include skill level (e.g.: martial arts) and size relative to the officer, the effects of alcohol or drugs or mental health issues, and the level of exhaustion or injury of both the subject and the officer.

9 Timothy Winegard, *Oka: A Convergence of Cultures*, (Kingston: Canadian Defence Academy Press, 2008), 141, 189, 201. Winegard presents General John de Chastelain's view that the Oka operation was a form of peacekeeping, and his direction that the CAF would not fire the first shot. Ibid., 128.

10 The offender is facing 10 charges of 1st Degree Murder and 13 counts of Attempted Murder for his 37 second rampage.

11 CBC News, "Officer praised after taking down Toronto van attack suspect without gunfire," CBC.ca, 24 April 2018, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/officer-praised-taking-van-attack-suspect-custody-peaceful-1.4632661>, accessed 15 January 2019.

12 Constable James Forcillo of the Toronto Police Service was convicted of Attempted Murder and sentenced to six years imprisonment. He was acquitted of the charge of 2nd Degree Murder for the first volley of shots he fired at Sammy Yatim, but was deemed to have exceeded his authorization under Section 25 of the Criminal Code when he fired the second volley of shots.

13 Sun Tzu, *The Art of Warfare* (New York: Dover Publications, 2002).

14 House of Commons, *Minutes of the Proceedings and Evidence of the Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs*, Issue No. 55, 88. See also Winegard, 139.

15 Winegard, 171.

16 Ibid., 170, 194.

ABOUT THE CONTRIBUTORS

COOMBS – Colonel Howard G. Coombs, PhD., is an Assistant Professor and the Associate Chair War Studies at the Royal Military College of Canada, in Kingston, Ontario. He is also a part-time Army reservist who serves with the Office of the Chief of Reserves, located at the Canadian Armed Forces National Defence Headquarters.

DANIELSEN – Dr. Tone Danielsen is a social anthropologist and works as a principal researcher at the Norwegian Defense Research Establishment with focus on special operations forces. Dr. Danielsen has done extensive studies on military culture, operations, team work, innovation, leadership, organizational changes, and civil-military cooperation. She has worked as an adviser in CIMIC and Joint Operations at The Norwegian Defense University College, as a senior adviser at the Norwegian Ministry of Defense with concept and doctrine development, and at the Oslo Metropolitan University on cross-cultural communication. Dr. Danielsen was educated at the University of Oslo, and has been visiting fellow at University of St. Andrews. She lived and worked a decade in the Middle East and Mediterranean area, and did her first fieldwork in Syria.

DAWE – Major-General Peter S. Dawe is the Commander of the Canadian Special Operations Forces Command. He joined the Canadian Armed Forces in 1990 as an artillery officer. Following a tour to Cyprus as a troop commander, he reclassified to the infantry and joined the Second Battalion, Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry (PPCLI). Major-General Dawe has commanded at every level from platoon to brigade to include 3 PPCLI (2009-2011) and most recently 2 Canadian Mechanized Brigade Group (2013-2015). His extra-regimental employment has included tours at the Canadian Forces Leadership and Recruit School as a recruit and basic officer training company commander; Land Forces Central Area Headquarters as the G3 Operations; the Canadian Special Operations Regiment as the Operations Officer; Canadian Special Operations Forces Command Headquarters as the J3 and Deputy Commander. His operational tours include Cyprus, Bosnia, and two tours to Afghanistan. In 2002, he served as the 3 PPCLI Battle-Group Operations Officer for Operation APOLLO in Kandahar, Afghanistan, for which he was awarded the

US Bronze Star Medal. From May 2011 to March 2012, he served as the Deputy Commander of Canada's Contribution to the Training Mission in Afghanistan and was awarded the Meritorious Service Medal. Major-General Dawe is a graduate of the National Security Programme, the US Capstone Programme, and the Coalition Joint Forces Special Operations Component Commander Course. He holds a Bachelor's degree in Military Arts and Science, a Master's degree in Defence Studies, and a Master's degree in Public Administration from the Royal Military College of Canada. He was appointed an Officer of the Order of Military Merit in 2015.

DAY – Lieutenant-General (retired) Mike Day has commanded at every level and rank, in a variety of units, and deployments around the world. In addition to having the privilege of serving and commanding within his Regiment, most of his field and command time has been as an Operator within Canada's Counter Terrorist and Special Forces community commanding both Joint Task Force Two (JTF 2) and Canada's Special Operations Forces Command. He has also served in a variety of Senior Staff appointments including the Canadian Armed Forces senior Military Officer in the Defence Policy Group, and the Chief Strategic Planner for the future of the Canadian Armed Forces where he also oversaw the development of DND's Space and Cyber Programs. In addition to his work in the private sector, Lieutenant-General (retired) Day is working towards his PhD in War Studies with a focus on Special Operation Forces.

HORN – Dr. Bernd Horn is a retired infantry colonel who has held key command and staff appointments in the Canadian Armed Forces, including Deputy Commander of the Canadian Special Operations Forces Command, Commanding Officer of the 1st Battalion, The Royal Canadian Regiment and Officer Commanding 3 Commando, the Canadian Airborne Regiment. Dr. Horn is also an adjunct professor of history at the Royal Military College of Canada. He is currently the Command Historian at the CANSOFCOM Education and Research Centre.

HUNTER – Colonel Steven Hunter joined the Canadian Armed Forces in 1993 as an Artillery Officer. In 2002, he was selected for service in Joint Task Force Two (JTF 2). In 2005, after serving as a Squadron Troop Commander, he deployed to Afghanistan as the Operations Officer for a Special Operations Task Force. In 2007, he was awarded a Chief of Defence Staff Commendation for leading the security effort for the Manley Panel as they travelled throughout Afghanistan

to assess Canada's future contribution. In 2008, after serving as JTF 2's Chief Instructor, he was appointed as a Sabre Squadron Commander. In 2009, Colonel Hunter returned to Afghanistan as a Lieutenant-Colonel (While So Employed) to command a Special Operations Task Force, where he was awarded the Meritorious Service Medal. In 2010, Colonel Hunter commanded a Special Operations Task Force during the Vancouver 2010 Olympic Games. In 2014, Colonel Hunter was appointed Commanding Officer of the Canadian Special Operations Regiment, where he deployed to Iraq as a Task Force Commander on three separate occasions. For his efforts he was awarded the Meritorious Service Cross. Throughout his career, Colonel Hunter has also deployed on small missions to Kosovo, Haiti, Central Africa, and the Middle East. Colonel Hunter holds a BA in Psychology and Sociology from Carleton University and a Master of Defence Studies from RMCC.

KIRAS – James D. Kiras is Professor of Military and Strategic Studies at the School of Advanced Air and Space Studies, Maxwell AFB, AL. He has worked in and around the special operations community for more than 17 years, first in strategy and policy and more recently in a consulting and advising capacity. He is a JSOU Senior Fellow, an Irregular Warfare Studies Fellow of the USAF Special Operations School, Associate Editor of the *Special Operations Journal*, and a Founding Member of the Special Operations Research Association. His first book, entitled *Special Operations and Strategy*, was published by Routledge in 2006.

LIEBER – Dr. Paul Lieber is an award-winning scholar and practitioner on/of global strategic communication and information operations, with over two dozen scholarly publications on these topics. A contracted (Metis Solutions) Resident Senior Fellow at USSOCOM's Joint Special Operations University, he's served as the Command Writer for two USSOCOM Commanders, likewise Strategic Communication Advisor to the Commander of Special Operations Command-Australia. Within academic environs, Dr. Lieber was a member of the Graduate faculty at Emerson College, University of South Carolina, and the University of Canberra, respectively. Within these roles, he taught across the entire strategic communication curriculum, with a research emphasis on social media-based persuasion and methodological design. Dr. Lieber holds a Ph.D. in Mass Communication and Public Affairs and a Masters of Mass Communication from Louisiana State University, likewise a B.S. in Broadcast Journalism from Syracuse University.

MACKISOC – Mark Mackisoc has been a police officer for 23 years, and a uniformed patrol Shift Supervisor with the Ontario Provincial Police since 2002. He is a student in the War Studies PhD program at the Royal Military College of Canada, where his research interest is police and military culture.

PETIT – Colonel (retired) Brian S. Petit is the CEO of Garfield Syndicate, LLC. He consults on leadership, strategy, planning and organizational culture. He retired in 2017 as a US Army Special Forces Colonel, serving 25 years in infantry, airborne and special operations units. After an initial assignment as a light infantryman, Brian earned his Green Beret (US Army Special Forces) in 1997. Over the next twenty years, he commanded special operations units in the Balkans, Iraq, Afghanistan, Southeast Asia, The Philippines, Europe, and Africa. In sum, he served over five years in combat or conflict zones. In 2013, Colonel Petit published *Going Big by Getting Small: The Application of Operational Art by Special Operations in Phase Zero*. His book was on the US Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) Commanding General's 2015 recommended reading list and is in use in both military and academic curricula. He has published in *Special Warfare, Military Review*, *Small Wars Journal,* and *War on the Rocks.*

RUBRIGHT – Dr. Richard Rubright served in the 19th and 20th Special Forces Groups (Airborne) prior to separation due to a parachute injury. Before retiring he was both a Professor and Senior Fellow at USSOCOM's Joint Special Operations University. Dr. Rubright holds bachelor's degrees in Political Science and History from the University of Utah, a master's degree in International Politics from the University of Glasgow, UK and a PhD in International Relations/Strategic Studies from the University of Reading, UK. Dr. Rubright's latest book*, A Unified Theory for Special Operations*, is available from the JSOU Press.

SEAR – Thomas (Tom) Sear is a PhD candidate in Cyber Security, University of New South Wales (UNSW) Canberra Cyber at the Australian Defence Force Academy (ADFA). His PhD examines sociotechnical security in an era of "hyperhistory" through a focus on social media. His research focuses on how pivotal historio-cultural mythologies are incorporated into cyberspace, contribute to informational national identity and civic culture, and might offer protection against influence operations. Recently, Tom has made significant public contributions of analytical scholarship as a witness informing parliamentary government joint committees regarding cyber manipulation by Russia and China

in the Australian infosphere. Tom came to UNSW CBR, ADFA from a career in higher education research policy including leading roles in the Australasian Research Management Society (ARMS). Tom has also had a long association with the international Special Operations network.

THOMAS – Ms. Jody Thomas is the Deputy Minister of the Department of National Defence (DND). Ms. Thomas began her career as a Public Servant in 1988 and she amassed a deep and varied experience working at senior levels in the Public Service. In 2010, she joined the Canadian Coast Guard as the Deputy Commissioner of Operations, a position she held until September 2014, when she was appointed Special Advisor to the Deputy Secretary to the Cabinet (Operations) at the Privy Council Office. On 1 January 2015, she was appointed as Commissioner of the Coast Guard. In March 2017, she joined DND as the Senior Associate Deputy Minister. She was appointed to her current position on 23 October 2017. She holds a commission in the Naval Reserve and she holds a Bachelor of Arts from Carleton University.

GLOSSARY OF ABBREVIATIONS

A2AD	Anti-access area denial
AAR	After Action Review
AI	Artificial Intelligence
BUDS	Basic Underwater Demolition / SEAL
CAF	Canadian Armed Forces
CANSOF	Canadian Special Operations Forces
CANSOFCOM	Canadian Special Operations Forces Command
CDS	Chief of the Defence Staff
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CRS	Congressional Research Service
DARPA	Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency
DND	Department of National Defence
DoD	Department of Defense
E14	(Norwegian) Section for Special Reconnaissance
ERC	Education and Research Centre
F-35	Joint Strike Fighter
F3EA	Find, Fix, Finish, Exploit, Analyze
FAA	Federal Aviation Administration
FSK	*Forsvarets spesialkommano*
FSSF	First Special Service Force

GE	General Electric
GHQ	General Headquarters
HUMINT	Human Intelligence
IAF	Israeli Air Force
IED	Improvised Explosive Device
ISIS	Islamic State in Syria
ISR	Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance
JSOC	Joint Special Operations Command
LAV	Light Armoured Vehicle
LZ	Landing Zone
Milorg D25	Military Organization District 25
MJK	*Marinejegerkommandoen* (Naval Special Operations Commando)
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NCO	Non-Commissioned Officer
NORSOF	Norwegian SOF
OCO	Overseas Contingency Operations
OP	Observation Post
OPSEC	Operational Security
OSS	Office of Strategic Services
PoW	Prisoner of War
PPE	Personal Protective Equipment
QR&O	*Queen's Regulations and Orders*

R&D	Research & Development
R22eR	Royal 22nd Regiment
ROE	Rules of Engagement
SEAL	Sea Air Land
SEC	Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC)
SHAEF	Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force
SOE	Special Operations Executive
SOF	Special Operations Forces
SOTF	Special Operations Task Force
TALOS	Tactical Assault Light Operator Suit (program)
TTPs	Tactics, Techniques and Procedures
UN	United Nations
UPT	Undergraduate Pilot Training
US	United States
USSF	United States Special Forces
USSOCOM	United States Special Operations Command
WWII	World War II
ZANLA	Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army
5G	5th Generation
9/11	11 September 2011 (terrorist attack in New York)

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